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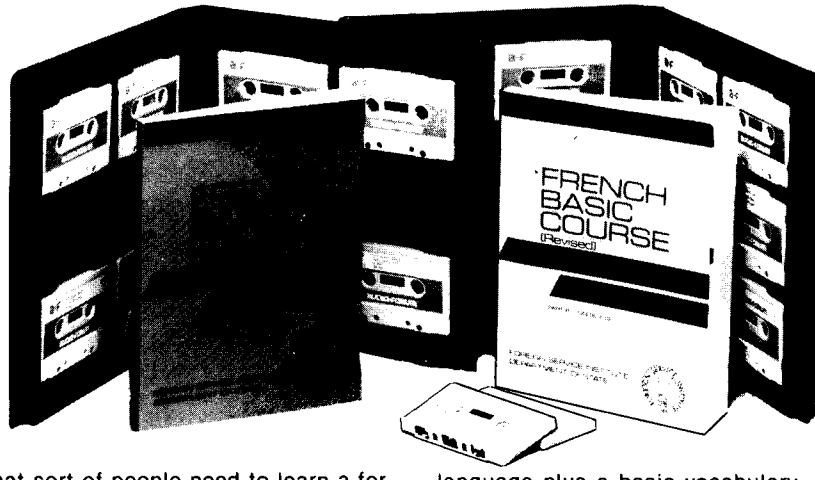

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Out of My Mind

Take the "A" Train

JEREMY BERNSTEIN

Last spring I came across an obituary notice in the *New York Times* that brought back all sorts of memories. It read:

> William Alonzo (Cat) Anderson, a trumpet player best remembered for recordings of "Take the A Train" with Duke Ellington's orchestra, died of cancer yesterday. He was sixty-four years old.
>
> Mr. Anderson, who learned trumpet as a boy in a home for orphans in Charleston, S.C., patterned himself after Louis Armstrong but soon developed the powerful high-note mastery that became the trademark of his fifty-year career.
>
> He was born in Greenville, S.C. Mr. Anderson toured first with the Carolina Cottonpickers, in 1932–36, with the Sunset Royal Orchestra, 1936–41, and joined Ellington in 1944.
>
> His sound helped shape the smooth cosmopolitan Ellington style of the 1940s. For a time he struck out on his own, touring with his own band after 1947, but he went back to Ellington in 1950.
>
> The piercing sound of the high-register lead trumpet in Ellington's signature song, Billy Strayhorn's "Take the A Train," belonged to Cat Anderson.
>
> Recently, Mr. Anderson had played with his own quartet and did studio recording sessions in Los Angeles.
>
> Surviving is his wife, Dorothy.

For a few years, while I was in high school, Cat Anderson—the name came from the remarkable feline appearance of his broad open face (he looked like a large tiger)—was one of my closest friends. Considering the way in which my life has evolved, this part of it seems difficult now to fathom—even to me—and I would like to explain how all of it came about.

In the 1940s, when I was growing up in New York City, middle-class families felt that it was desirable, if not essential, to send their children to private schools. The public schools were alleged to be both overcrowded and dangerous. *La plus ça change....* Unknown to me, at that very time there were two New York public schools, the Bronx High School of Science and Peter Stuyvesant High School, where I could have gotten a first-rate scientific education instead of the unbelievably mediocre hodgepodge I did get. But our school did have some sort of psychologist—she was known as a "guidance counselor"—to whom we were obliged to report for periodic visits. My last visit with her took place in the spring of 1947, and there are two things I remember clearly about it. The first was that, according to her, the intelligence in our family was distributed inversely with age—my younger brother was smarter than I was, and my still younger sister was the brightest of all. Why she felt that I should be informed of this, I haven't the foggiest idea. Her other observation was that I appeared to suffer from an excessive preoccupation—a fascination for celebrated people (celebrities)—which she thought might indicate a sense of insecurity. At the time I had no idea of what to make of this either, but I did understand how she might have come to her conclusions about celebrities.

I wrote a weekly column for my high school newspaper, which I called "Seeing Stars." I think that, even then, I was already addicted to *The New Yorker*, and I wrote a "Talk of the Town"-like column for our newspaper, which consisted of interviews I had somehow ob-

JEREMY BERNSTEIN is professor of physics at the Stevens Institute of Technology and a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. His latest book is *Science Observed*.

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tained with people like Edgar Bergen, Henry Morgan, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, and Duke Ellington. Furthermore, on a questionnaire that I filled out preceding my interview, at the place where I was to put down my future career goals, I wrote, "radio announcer or jazz trumpet player"—both of which careers then appealed to me greatly. In fact, I had even gone for an announcer's audition at WQXR, the classical music station. It was given by Duncan Pirnie, now the dean of that station's announcers. After I had read for him, he said, "Son, can you take it?" I nodded a weak affirmative, and he said, "Frankly, you were terrible." If I really wanted to become a radio announcer, he said, I should practice reading newspaper columns aloud and then come back. I did that for awhile and then lost interest.

My trumpet playing lasted a good deal longer. It began in the late 1930s and went on for some twenty years. At the time about which I am writing, I was studying the trumpet at a music school that was run by the Ninety-second Street Young Men's Hebrew Association. I studied classical trumpet but spent most of my practice hours trying, without much success, to imitate the jazz trumpet solos that I had heard on records. I had a large collection of sheet music on which some of these solos had been written down, and I tried to read them as faithfully as I could. During much of this period I still had the idea of becoming a radio announcer. I had made the wonderful discovery that if one looked like one knew what one was doing, it was possible to sneak past the guards at the NBC studios in Radio City and to wander around the place unmolested. The networks—there were actually two, NBC "red" and NBC "blue"—offered guided tours, and for this purpose glass "bubbles" were in place overlooking the studios. From them I would watch, hour after hour, many of my favorite radio programs being produced. Those were still the days of the sound-effects man, and the studios used to be filled with squeaking doors, sheet metal that sounded like rain when it was rattled, and boxes full of cornstarch that, when stepped on, sounded like footsteps in the snow. Many days after school—and always on Saturdays—I used to take the A train (the Eighth Avenue express subway) down to Radio City and immerse myself in that absolutely marvelous and peculiar world. It was on one of those Saturday afternoon forays that I "discovered" the Duke Ellington Orchestra.

It might be imagined that, because of my interest in jazz, I would have known about Duke Ellington. In fact, I did not. My idea of great jazz at that time was Harry James, mainly because of his uncanny ability to play the trumpet. For me, then, the ne plus ultra of jazz was to listen to James play "Carnival of Venice" or "The Flight of the Bumblebee" on the trumpet. Notes cascaded in great clumps. The triplets appeared to be impeccable, and the scales, all played at incredible velocity, almost unbelievable. Much later, when I got to know Cat Anderson, who also admired James, he told me that if one slowed down the old seventy-eight RPM records with one's thumb, one could actually hear a few clinkers in these solos. I never had the heart to try. In any case, one Saturday afternoon as I was wandering around Radio City, I came to a large studio that appeared to be set up for a musical broadcast. Ellington used to broadcast Saturday afternoons on NBC "blue." There was a large number of men—black—seated around the studio in various stages of relaxation. Some were reading, a few were fiddling with instruments, and in a corner I spotted what appeared to be a chess game. I mention that the musicians were black because all of the musicians I had interviewed—Benny Goodman, Tommy Dorsey, and the rest—were white, and it was very rare then to see a racially mixed jazz orchestra. I knew in some vague way that jazz had begun as a black art form, but I had never seen a black musician play, let alone had a black friend. There were no blacks in our school. In any event, I seated myself in an obscure corner of the studio to wait to see what would happen. Just before whatever hour it was that the orchestra was to play, Duke Ellington went to the piano and began playing the opening chords of "Take the A Train." As if by magic the orchestra gathered itself together, and as the program went on the air, "A Train" was resounding throughout the studio with some of the musicians playing while walking to take their seats on the platform. I was overwhelmed by the music, and I decided then and there that, as far as jazz was concerned, Harry James was

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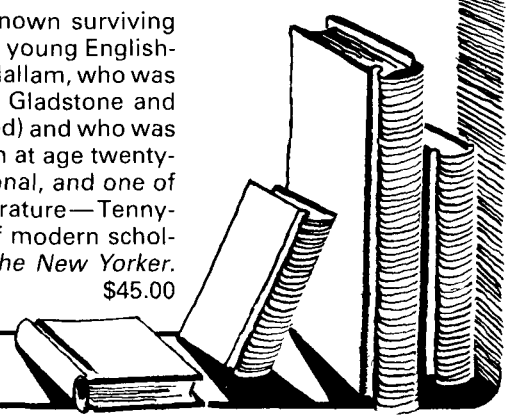

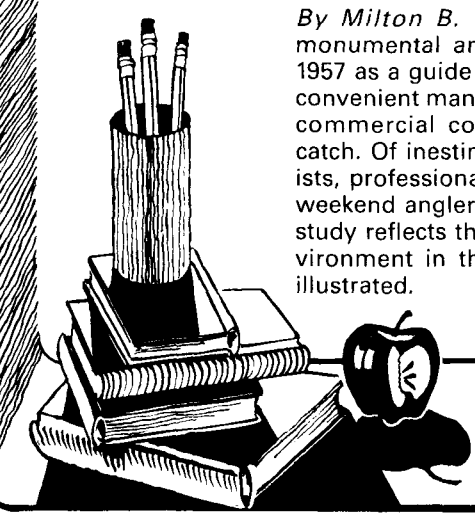

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not the True Jacob and that I wanted very much to get to know and understand these marvelous musicians.

For several Saturdays I snuck into these concerts without finding a way to open up a conversation with anyone. Finally I found an entrée, and this, oddly enough, turned out to be through chess. The lead tenor saxophone player at that time was a man named Al Sears. (The great Ben Webster had departed the orchestra not long before.) Sears had a sort of dual personality. While playing, and especially in front of an audience, he was a veritable tornado, given to a great deal of foot stomping and general gymnastics with his saxophone. In fact, the other members of the orchestra used to kid Sears about these theatrics—sometimes while he was playing one of his more outré solos, they would pass around one of the hat-shaped metal mutes that the trumpet section used when playing choruses in numbers like "It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got That Swing." Change would be put into the hat with a clanking noise that was audible to Sears but not to the audience. (Sears was also a composer. During the time I knew him, he wrote a rather successful song called "Castle Rock." I once asked him what the title meant, thinking it might have some arcane literary significance. "Jerry," he said kindly, "a rock is an [Anglo-Saxon], and a castle rock is a great big [Anglo-Saxon].") Offstage, on the other hand, he was a quiet, studious man. He had worked his way through college by playing the saxophone and, after graduation, not finding any comparable job opportunities open to him, had continued, I think somewhat reluctantly, with his music. While in school, Sears became interested in chess, and he used to bring a pocket-sized set with him on Saturdays to pass the time before the broadcasts began. Chess was then one of my other loves, so sensing an opportunity, I asked Sears if he would like to play. In this way we began a series of chess games that took place every Saturday.

The games aroused a great deal of interest among the rest of the orchestra, and before long I had gotten to know most of the players, including Cat Anderson and the Duke himself. I simply became part of the scene. If the orchestra played in Harlem, I used to take the A train up to 125th Street where either Al Sears or Cat Anderson would meet me and then make sure I got back on the subway to go home afterward. I was then fifteen, and I guess they were worried that I might get into trouble wandering around late at night by myself. When Cat Anderson learned that I played the trumpet, he asked me to bring it with me so he could hear me play. In truth, I was pretty bad. I had a big round tone, a small technique, and very little musical sense. Cat listened, refrained from stating the obvious, and gave me a few pointers—something he continued to do whenever the orchestra was in town. On one memorable occasion, with the collusion of the rest of the trumpet section, and no doubt with the Duke himself, I was allowed to sit in and blow a few notes when the orchestra played in what was then Dave Wolper's Hurricane Club on Broadway. I doubt if anyone in the audience noticed.

When I went to Harvard, my trumpet went with me, and I played in the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra. When Duke Ellington came to Boston, I always went to see him and to have dinner with members of the group. My parents by then had moved back to Rochester from New York City, and during one of my school vacations, Duke Ellington played Batavia, which was nearby. Sears stayed in our house, and later my father drove the three of us to Batavia. My father is a rabbi, and knowing the Duke's interest in religion, Sears arranged for all of us to have lunch in the Berry Patch in Batavia. During lunch the Duke said to my father that if he could take only two things to a desert island, one of them would be the Bible and the other would be Lena Horne. I forget what my father's reply was.

Early in my sophomore year at Harvard—the fall of 1948—I got the inspired notion of inviting the Duke Ellington Orchestra to play at Harvard. To this end I organized, with a few friends, something called the New Friends of Jazz. As I write this I have in front of me a sere, brownish document, dated October 3, 1948, that reads:

Sirs:

The interest in jazz, expressed by most Americans, [I have preserved the original punctuation. I do not know what the commas are doing there.] is as pronounced at Harvard as elsewhere. [I am not sure

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there *was* much interest in jazz at Harvard in 1948.] However, in the recent past there has been no group at the college which was willing to take the initiative in organizing, sponsoring and presenting the best in modern jazz via the concert stage. We of the New Friends of Jazz hope to fill this gap. [There was once a review of a book in mathematics that contained the sentence: "This book fills a well-needed gap."]

The New Friends proposes to present a series of four concerts in Sander's Theatre during the following year. The first of these is tentatively planned for November 12, and will feature Duke Ellington and his orchestra. We plan to charge an admission sufficiently great so that Mr. Ellington and his successors will be able to play the date without financial loss to themselves. Further, we wish to make sufficient money to enable us to run our organization in the future on a sound basis. [I also thought we might make a killing.]

As the New Friends is purely a promotional unit, the ordinary mechanism of club government is unnecessary. [We were filing to become a club like the Harvard Lampoon or the Porcellian.] The members have been selected for particular talents [one of which was to put up the initiation fee] and will each have an area of responsibility in which he will have complete charge. Policy decisions will be made by simple majority vote and for the time being Jerry Bernstein and Sidney Stires [now a successful New York investment banker] have assumed the offices of president and vice president.

I signed the letter and appended to it a brief constitution and a list of members that numbered ten, not including Stires and myself. We must have gotten some sort of preliminary go-ahead from the university, because I have a copy of an ad that offers tickets at "College Prices"—a $2.40 maximum—to a "Carnegie Hall Attraction." We sold a few tickets before the university decided that we were not a proper club and put us out of business. I have a copy of a small ad that appeared in the *Harvard Crimson* noting that the Duke Ellington concert had been "postponed" and offering a refund to anyone who had purchased a ticket. That was the end of the New Friends of Jazz.

The last time I saw Sears was in my senior year. The orchestra had come to Boston, and I invited Sears to Sunday lunch at Eliot House, where I was then living. I remember that the lunch was rather painful. By this time I was deeply committed to studying mathematics and physics and was no longer the fifteen-year-old boy who used to come up to Harlem at night to follow the band. Sears must have sensed this without my saying anything, because when we parted he mentioned it, and I could not deny it. I had gone on to become something else and had turned a page in my life. Sears did not stay with the orchestra too much longer. He went into music publishing and died a few years ago.

When I was still in high school, I tried to help Cat Anderson with his project of starting his own orchestra. That had been his ambition for many years. One of my "Seeing Stars" columns was an interview with the singer Nat "King" Cole, which took place backstage in the old Paramount Theater in New York. During this interview I told Cole about Cat Anderson's project and that Cat was looking for help with it. I have no idea if anything came of that, but Cat's orchestra was not a success, because, as his obituary notes, a few years later he was back with Duke Ellington. The last time I saw him and also spoke with the Duke was sometime in the late 1960s. The orchestra had an engagement at the Empire Room of the Waldorf Astoria, and I went to see it. I had not seen Cat for many years, but he looked unchanged and told me that he had moved to California, where he spent his final years.

The trumpet went with me from Harvard to the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, where I played in a little group that gave a concert of ancient music. (Someone made a record of it, and when I went to Princeton to teach a couple of years ago, I was told that it had been played on the local radio station.) I remember that after our concert, one of my colleagues thought of a remark that Niels Bohr was supposed to have made about a lady musician: "She plays divinely bad."

Speaking of Bohr, the last time that I played my trumpet in public was at a New Year's Eve party in 1957. Marvin Goldberger, who was a physics professor at Princeton—he is now the president of Caltech—and his wife, Mildred, gave famous parties at Princeton. On this occasion he and Mildred outdid themselves. They hired the local firehouse and served roast suckling pig. I was to usher in the New Year at midnight by playing "Auld Lange Syne." Just before midnight I took out my horn and went into a corner to warm up. At

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midnight, as I began to play, the door of the firehouse opened and in walked Niels Bohr and Robert Oppenheimer. Oppenheimer gave me a very odd look, and I decided right then and there that the last thing I needed at the Institute was the reputation of being a minstrel. In any case, it was difficult to find a place to practice. So I sort of gave it up. Somehow the mouthpiece of the old Conn trumpet, which I had had since I first began playing in Rochester in the 1930s, froze to the rest of the instrument and could no longer be detached. This made it impossible to put the horn into its case, and I have no idea where it is now. A few years ago someone gave me a French army bugle to try, and I discovered that I no longer had any embouchure at all. Try as I would, not a single note came out.

Canada

W. S. Di Piero

The halfdark of morning,
maples rash with fall's
early burning, and north,
beyond the solemn tree line,
the stifled bark swelling
until it broke clean free:
the air split and crackled
and a swoon of Canada geese
widened above against
the gray unstirred heights.

You ran, still in your robe:
from its sailing blue skirts
to the tiny gold crosses
on your ears, you burst
off the porch, across
the grass, pitching your breath
toward the seasonal flight,
to see them just that once,
once hear annunciation
in the passing trace.

✪ W. S. DI PIERO teaches English at Northwestern University and is the translator of Leopardi's *Pensieri*. His book of poems, *The First Hour*, is forthcoming from Abattoir Editions.

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But I Generalize

ARISTIDES

As a university teacher, I don't normally call students "Honey," yet not long ago I not only called a student "Honey," but, in a state of complete exasperation, I invited her to dance. It happened, as scandalous things frequently do, out of town. I was lecturing at a school in Ohio, and during a session with a group of freshmen students, one of them, an earnest young woman, asked if I didn't think I sometimes engaged in dangerous generalizations. I allowed as how I generalized but that I was not aware of doing so dangerously. Could she give me an example? Reading from one of my sacred and profound works, she adduced the following instance on the behavior of immigrants to America: ". . . Greeks ran restaurants, the Jews went into retailing, the Italians sold produce and became florists, the Irish (along with being policemen) worked as waiters and owned neighborhood bars, the Germans did a bit of everything." Well, those were certainly generalizations, but what, I asked, was dangerous about them?

"Wouldn't they be offensive to the people about whom you say these things?" she answered.

"Why?" I rejoined. "I myself, a member of the Hebrew extraction, as a black sergeant of mine once referred to Jews, am not in the least offended that my coreligionists went into retailing in this country. Nor do I think that the Greeks, Irish, Germans, and Italians would be in the least offended by my generalizations about them."

"Still," she said, "what you wrote isn't true of *all* Greeks, Jews, Italians, and Irish."

"True enough," I said, "Einstein didn't go into retailing but relativity, Fermi didn't go into flowers but fission. But there is enough general truth to my statements to hold up. At least I believe there is."

"Even if there is," she said, "I don't think you're entitled to say things like that."

And then it happened: "Honey," said I, "if I can't say things like that, then we may as well turn on the stereo and start dancing, because all conversation becomes impossible."

Along with demonstrating my ability to overpower an eighteen-year-old girl in argument, this incident reminds me not only of my own love of generalization but of its importance to civilized discourse. Generalization, especially risky generalization, is one of the chief methods by which knowledge proceeds. In science such generalizations are called hypotheses, and eventually these scientific generalizations have to be backed up. Apparently, though, this is not even true of all scientific generalizations; I learn, in the pages of this magazine, for example, that Gödel thought that "not everything that is true is provable." And Valéry spoke of that body of items that "are neither true nor false—in fact they could not be either." Outside of science, not all generalizations have to—or indeed can—be backed up. I sometimes think risky generalizations are the only kind that are of interest. Safe generalizations are usually rather boring. Delete that "usually rather." Safe generalizations are quite boring. But I generalize.

Generalizations have had a very bad press. Part of the reason they have been so roundly contemned is that they can so readily be pressed into service for inimical causes. What else is racism, what else anti-Semitism, but faulty generalizations organized and systematized? The most thoughtful writers have implored those who generalize to knock it off. "All general judgments are loose, slovenly, imperfect," noted Montaigne. "General notions," wrote Lady Mary Wortley Montagu,

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"are generally wrong." And Blake, never noted for the light touch, added, "To generalize is to be an idiot." Yet all these attacks on generalization—it will not have been missed by close readers—are themselves generalizations.

There are generalizations and there are generalizations—which is not only a generalization but very close to a tautology. Allow me to elaborate. I myself have a sharp distaste for large social generalizations, those, that is, whose pretense is to take in all of society. Lonely crowds, affluent societies, organization men are not for me. I am not too wild about Me Decades or Future Shocks either. To pass muster with me, a generalization must not be too roomy, or cover too vast an area, or even be on too significant a subject. I despise, for instance, the notion that we are living in something called "a culture of narcissism," but I like very much John O'Hara's observation that "almost no woman who has gone beyond the eighth grade ever calls a fifty-cent piece a half-a-dollar." For me a generalization, like a friend, has to have a little modesty.

This doesn't mean that I am interested in modest generalizations exclusively. Not at all. I am afraid that I am one of those people who continues to read in the hope of sometime discovering in a book a single—and singular—piece of wisdom so penetrating, so soul stirring, so utterly applicable to my own life as to make all the bad books I have read seem well worth the countless hours spent on them. My guess is that this wisdom, if it ever arrives, will do so in the form of a generalization. My hope is that I am not dozing when it appears. Opportunity, to cite a generalization that is perhaps even more boring than it is false, knocks but once.

Meanwhile, I have an unrepentant fondness for authors who generalize. This would naturally include the great writers of aphorisms, many of them French (La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère, Chamfort), a few German (G. C. Lichtenberg, Karl Kraus, Meister Eckhart), an occasional Englishman (Horace Walpole), and no Americans (Emerson, for me, does not qualify). Although novelists are supposed to show and not tell, I take particular pleasure in novelists who take a few moments off now and again to generalize. George Eliot goes in for this sort of thing, Proust does it rather more frequently, and, among living novelists, Anthony Powell, in his twelve-novel cycle, *A Dance to the Music of Time*, can almost be said to specialize in it. Not only does Powell himself, through his narrator Nicholas Jenkins, generalize, but so do other of his characters (the composer Moreland notably among them); and sometimes whole scenes will be given over to characters who generalize back and forth with one another. These generalizations are often a touch oblique, but unfailingly interesting.

"Nothing dates people more than the standards from which they have chosen to react," is a fair though modest sample of Anthony Powell's work in this line. But it can—and does—get much richer. Of a woman in one of the novels, the narrator asks, "Was she determined, in the habit of neurotics, to try to make things as bad for others as for herself?" Generalization, in Powell's hands, can be used even in the process of description. Walking into an apartment, for example, one of his characters smells "the fumes of unambitious cooking." Or he can create a general type and then go on to generalize upon his generalization. Such a general type, for Powell, is the "habitual role-sustainer," of whom he writes:

> Habitual role-sustainers fall, on the whole, into two main groups: those who have gauged to a nicety what shows them off to best advantage: others, more romantic if less fortunate in their fate, who hope to reproduce in themselves arbitrary personalities that have won their respect, met in life, read about in papers and books, or seen in films. These self-appointed players of a part often have little or no aptitude, are even notably ill equipped by appearance or demeanor, to wear the costume or speak the lines of the prototype. Indeed, the very unsuitability of the role is what fascinates.

The power of this, as of most generalizations, depends upon the experience one brings to it. I, in my experience, have known a number of Powellian habitual role-sustainers, not the least a contemporary who, though born in the Middle West, when in his early twenties became a kind of Englishman, a role he has sustained for, lo, more than a quarter of a century now. He is of the second type of Powell's habitual role-sustainers—that is, he is unsuitable for the role he has chosen. It doesn't come off. What is intended as elegance plays as pompous, even faintly comic. But it is too late to change roles. All one can

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hope for him now is knighthood or a plaque in Westminster Abbey.

Again, Anthony Powell notes of another of his characters that he spoke a number of foreign languages with facility, and that, as with all people who speak foreign languages easily, he was not quite to be trusted. Now here is an extraordinary generalization. So extraordinary is it that a reader needs to rub his eyes and read it again. To speak foreign languages easily, Mr. Powell is saying, is to be not altogether reliable. This seems wild, possibly a little mad. However, it presents a problem, at least for me, because almost everyone I have known who has had great facility in speaking foreign languages has been something less than reliable. Perhaps this gift of fluency is a form of linguistic adaptation: nature, in its inscrutable wisdom, has known that these men, because of their unreliability, will be asked to cross many borders and hence speak many languages and has equipped them accordingly, as in equipping certain tree-dwelling monkeys with prehensile tails.

As in the above instance, personal experience of the subject being generalized about is often essential to one's judgment of the quality of a particular generalization. Experience is the developing solution in which many of the most interesting generalizations are exposed, revealing some to be blurry, some botched, some perfectly precise. A quick call to the consulate may be enough to determine whether there are, say, any miniature golf courses in Mozambique, but only a certain longevity can help one to judge Proust when, generalizing, he writes, "After a certain age, from self-esteem and from sagacity, it is to the things we most desire that we pretend to attach no importance." A twenty-two-year-old student cannot hope to know if that statement is true or not.

Sometimes one can have rather too much experience to judge a generalization. A few years ago, in *The New Yorker*, I read in a story by Cynthia Ozick about a character who was described, in a generalized detail, as the sort of man who carried in his pocket a Swiss army knife. Now the author clearly did not think well of this character, and the Swiss army knife was meant to be emblematic of his stuffiness and smugness, his superficiality and self-conceit. Did this generalized detail hold up? I thought about it, one hand scratching the back of my head, the other, in my pocket, fingering my two-blade Swiss army knife.

"Women," I recently heard an acquaintance opine, "are able to eat enormous quantities of ice cream." Are women able to eat enormous quantities of ice cream? I have neither strong views nor ample data on the question, but I rather like the spirit of disinterested wonder behind the generalization. I also approve its fine undemonstrability. True, I have known a number of women who were not otherwise great (how to put it?) trencherpersons who could nevertheless dispatch large quantities of ice cream. But not to like ice cream, it seems to me, is, rather as Dr. Johnson said about people who were tired of London, to show oneself tired of life. I wish this generalization to apply indiscriminately to women and men both.

Women, I suspect, must provide the single greatest subject for generalizations, and I am much too cunning and cowardly to attempt to add here to the already vast stockpile of these generalizations. In a too-brief essay entitled "What a Lovely Generalization!" James Thurber claimed that women themselves go in heavily for generalization and that a woman's "average generalization is from three to five times as broad as a man's." That is a statement that fits fairly snugly into the category of highly dubious generalization, with some overlap into that of broad generalization. Highly dubious generalizations, in my view, are often more interesting than broad generalizations—or they tend, at least, to be more amusing. ("Often," "at least," "in my view," "tend,"—my, that is an uncharacteristically qualified statement; I shall try not to let it happen again.) Such an amusing, highly dubious generalization is to be found in the reason Evelyn Waugh offered for the worsened quality of proofreading in his lifetime: "I am told that printers' readers no longer exist because clergymen are no longer unfrocked for sodomy."

Broad generalizations, with their companions sweeping statements and comfortable conclusions, are almost always less felicitous. There is usually something lumpy about them, something intellectually indigestible; one cannot quite, as generalizations ask you to do, swallow them whole. Henry Adams went in for such generalizations. Edmund Wilson once said of Adams that he "esteemed him without

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being too crazy about him." Among living contemporaries, Malcolm Muggeridge, a writer I happen to be crazy about without much esteeming, has come more and more to specialize in the broad generalization, an example of which, from Muggeridge's diaries, *Like It Was*, follows:

> Civilizations grow weak because in them power becomes divorced from the mob in the form of wealth and hereditary privilege, or even constitutional authority. Its everlasting fount is the envy of the poor for the rich, the desire of the humble and meek that the mighty should be pulled down and they installed in their place. This is the essence of politics, and everything else is phoney.

The sentiments do not disgust me. I rather like the snap of the last sentence, with its authoritative air of cutting through intellectual frills and fustian. It is that *s*, that use of the plural in civilizations, that does it in. A single civilization ought, it seems to me, to be the legal limit of the scope of any generalization.

Clearly, a number of interesting issues, problems, questions arise in connection with generalizations. But if any of them is to be dealt with in a serious manner, codification will be required, and codification takes time and money. I have, therefore, put in for a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities on behalf of a little not-for-profit organization I run, which I call The Center for Things on the Periphery and to which the codification of generalizations seems, as noted in my application, a perfect and highly interdisciplinary project. My grant, I have been given to understand, is still being processed, but the problem of codification of generalizations presses, and so, grantless, I beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly, et cetera, et cetera.

The first category is the most dangerous of generalizations and is called, fittingly, the dangerous generalization. Among dangerous generalizations, surely the most dangerous of all is the one that runs: "People who threaten suicide never do it." More common dangerous generalizations are those that have to do with racial and religious groups. To cite only a mild instance of such a generalization: in recent years I have more than once heard it said that, "Orientals are terrible drivers." Can this be true? Generalizations have this extraordinary self-fulfilling propensity. Since hearing the generalization about Orientals being terrible drivers, I have duly noted a great deal of terrible driving by Orientals. Hence the danger of racial and religious generalizations. Minority groups have enough problems without them. Let us, then, adopt the policy of only positive generalizations about racial and religious groups, so that we shall have only intellectual Jews, dignified blacks, cultivated Orientals, and so on. The blandness of this will soon become so boring that in time perhaps these generalizations will die out altogether.

Generalizations that are close to racial and religious generalizations and that I hope will stay around are those about nations, their character and the conduct and quality of their citizens. There is something about the tone and tenor of these generalizations that I prize, even though they tend overwhelmingly to be malicious. At their most malicious, they run along the lines of the joke which has it that both the Hungarian and the Rumanian will sell you his grandmother, but the (I forget which) is worse because he cannot be trusted to deliver. Stendhal, who was a world-class generalizer, scarcely ever seems intellectually happier than when generalizing about a nation. Early in the pages of his *Life of Rossini*, Stendhal reports that the citizens of the nations of the southern part of Europe do not have the patience and perseverance to become first-rate violinists and flautists, and "instrumental music has wholly taken refuge among peaceful, patient folk beyond the Rhine." The reason that France has produced no great opera, according to Stendhal, is that French composers "have chosen blindly to imitate the Italian conception of *love*, whereas love, in France, is nothing but a feeble and second-rate emotion, entirely overwhelmed by *vanity* and stifled by the witty subtleties of *intellect*." Good old Stendhal, like a superior billiard player, he was not above kissing one generalization off against another. Thus, after writing about love being but a feeble and second-rate emotion in France—a generalization lovely both in its amplitude and its specificity—he rolls right on to write: "Now, whether or not there be any truth in this impertinent generalization, I think it will be universally acknowledged that music can achieve no effect at all save by appealing to the imagination."

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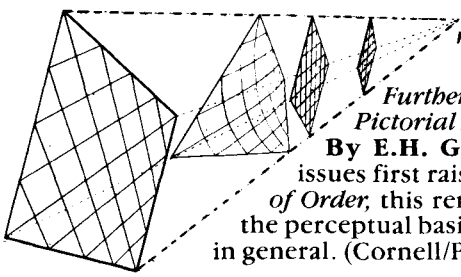

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The authority for Stendhal's generalizations was that he had visited the countries about which he had generalized so ex cathedra-ly. He could answer in the affirmative the question, "Vas you der, Henri?" One of the great pleasures of travel, surely, is the right it confers on the traveler to generalize about the places he has visited. Generalizations about a foreign country or strange city are a form of intellectual slide show, and it is difficult not to bring these slides out to show to friends back home. One is, though, under an obligation not to bring back boring slides—not to show the intellectual equivalent of pictures of the kids atop the Eiffel Tower or of Ethel on a donkey in front of the pyramids. Generalizations about places must be fresh and neatly formulated. A friend, back from a week in Houston, recently remarked, "Everything vicious that has ever been said about Los Angeles is true of Houston."

The farther away the country or city about which one is generalizing, the more sweep and grandeur one may inject into one's generalizations. I much admire the travel essays of Jan Morris, but even in my admiration I am amused by the sheer width of her generalizations. She can write, "Indians, of course, love to reduce the prosaic to the mystic." That "of course" is, of course, a splendid touch. Again: "Delhi is a city of basic, spontaneous emotions: greed, hate, revenge, love, pity, kindness, the murderous shot, the touch of the hand." Couldn't that sentence, with just a bit of fine tuning, be written about Chicago? It could, but Chicago is perhaps too close to home for one to dare it. Or yet again: "Iowans are marvelously free of grudge or rancor; violence is not really their style. . . ." If that generalization seems fairly sound to you, think again, for in its original form it was written not about Iowans at all but about Egyptians. As someone who himself goes in for generalizations, it's enough to take my breadth away.

"There are two categories of people," wrote Kleist, "those who think in terms of metaphors and those who think in terms of formulas." I used to have a stronger taste for this kind of generalization than I now do. There is something appealing in the finitude of them. If there are only two types or categories or kinds—or even if there are four or five—then the world suddenly seems so much more intellectually manageable. Whole works have been built on such generalizations. The late Philip Rahv's most famous essay, "Palefaces and Redskins," is one example; another is Isaiah Berlin's *The Hedgehog and the Fox*. Do people, I not long ago found myself saying to myself, divide between those who wish to survive life and those who wish to master it? Not bad, eh? Or so I thought, until it occurred to me that I fell into neither of my own two lovely categories. I wish neither to master life nor merely to survive it; I wish to understand it (more than I do) and to enjoy it (even more than I have).

Can it be that there are finally only two kinds of generalization: those that are true and those that aren't? Isn't it enough that a generalization be stately and finely formulated? Isn't it almost too much to ask that it also be true? Flannery O'Connor writes in a letter, "I have never met anyone with a stutter who was not nice." Now here is a generalization one wants to be true; something deep yet obscure makes one want to think that people put to the torture of the perpetual frustration of stuttering are, somehow or other, sainted. Alas, I have met people with stutters who are not nice, which for me does in that generalization. Other generalizations, especially those written in French, seem to call for assent; no language seems to me better suited for the flashy but false generalization than French. Thus, an anonymous Frenchman observes that translations are like beautiful women: "*Si elles sont fidèles elles ne sont pas belles; si elles sont belles elles ne sont pas fidèles.*" [If they are faithful, they aren't beautiful; if they are beautiful, they aren't faithful.] Sorry, but I have met a few beautiful and faithful translations and even more beautiful and faithful women. Ah, me, another generalization goes down the tubes.

Permit me now to suggest that there are not two but four basic kinds of generalization. In order of their popularity in the world, these are: Generalizations that are (1) commonplace but false; (2) commonplace and true; (3) original but false; and (4) original and true. An original but false generalization, in my opinion, is E. M. Cioran's remark that "people who are in love agree to overestimate each other," while an example of an original and true generalization, again in my opinion, is Sir Herbert Grierson's remark that "witticisms

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are never quite true." As it happens, I adore witticisms, and it wounds me to acknowledge that I think Sir Herbert Grierson's remark both original and true. Yet true in my heart I know it is, and I take it as bad news.

But then so many of the best generalizations—that is, the original and true generalizations—seem to convey bad news. I take as bad news, for example, G. C. Lichtenberg's observation that "people who have read a great deal seldom make great discoveries." Of such discouraging generalizations, there is no shortage. Another term for a discouraging generalization is an aphorism. An aphorism need not be discouraging, but the best ones, again, usually are. Along with being assertive and aristocratic, aphorism tends also to be world-weary. The Viennese writer Karl Kraus, who wrote some of the most devastating aphorisms, said of the form, "An aphorism need not be true, but it should surpass the truth. It must go beyond it with one leap." An example from Karl Kraus: "No ideas and the ability to express them—that's a journalist."

Do nations or cultures get the aphorists they deserve? Many of the aphorisms of Karl Kraus ("Social policy is the despairing decision to undertake a corn operation on a cancer patient") as well as many of those of Lichtenberg ("What they call 'heart' is located far lower than the fourth waistcoat button") are imbued with anger and disgust. Although Lichtenberg died in 1799 and Kraus in 1936, both men were raised and worked in Teutonic cultures. Can it, then, be that these men, though born more than a century apart, are expressing a similar cultural taste in generalization? If Teutons seem to go in for rage and loathing in their generalizations, the French seem to prefer an amused puncturing of pretensions, at least to judge from their aphorists—from La Rochefoucauld ("One would not know how to count up all the varieties of vanity"), to La Bruyère ("Favor places a man above his equals, the loss of it below them"), to Paul Valéry ("I introduce here a slight observation which I shall call 'philosophical,' meaning simply that we can do without it").

If a nation or a culture gets the kind of aphorists it deserves, why has the United States had no first-class aphorists? Instead we have supplied the fodder for fine generalizations by foreign visitors, from Tocqueville to Bryce to Santayana to Huizinga. But of ambitious aphorists we have chiefly Emerson. "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm," said Emerson, but perhaps he might have done better to temper his own. Emerson said everything. If he said one thing ("I hate quotations"), he could often be relied upon to have said the reverse ("By necessity, by proclivity—and by delight, we all quote"). Covering himself, he also said, "A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds. . . ." Emerson's generalizations are more like pronunciamentos. His tone is too vatic, his formulations are devoid of charm. As generalizations go, Emerson's are in many ways a model of how not to do it.

How, then, does one do it? How best does one fashion a generalization? Nothing so improves the style as having something to say. Yet the saying of it, when it comes to generalizations, is usually everything. Generalizations are of that body of knowledge known as unsystematic truths, and they may, as John Stuart Mill says, "be exhibited in the same unconnected state in which they were discovered." Still, it will not do to come on too high, or too sweepingly. Generalizations that begin "Man is . . ." or "Woman is . . ." seem almost to command dissent. Even for generalizations they are too general. "Nature" is another word I recommend pruning from all generalizations, and for largely the same reason: it is too vague, too ethereal, too much. Even God is more comprehensible than Nature. Man, Woman, Nature, God—these things, being general enough, stand in no need of further generalization.

"The most dangerous moment for a bad government is when it begins to reform itself." Now that generalization—it is by Tocqueville—seems to me splendid. It comes at things at a near perfect level of generality, neither too high nor too low. It calls up all those governments, from Roman to French to Russian, whose last-minute attempts at reform only made easier the way for revolutions that toppled them. Its tone, authoritative and slightly ironic, seems to me near perfect as well, being neither dogmatic nor hesitant—dogmatism and hesitancy being the Scylla and Charybdis between which any seaworthy generalization must sail. If you can find objections or exceptions to Tocqueville's generalization, that is all right, too. Mill said of such propositions that "they are very seldom ex-

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actly true; but then this, unfortunately, is an objection to all human knowledge."

That most human knowledge is not exactly true I find rather comforting, as long as I keep in mind that some knowledge is a good deal more exact than other knowledge. The lesson in this for those of us who love generalizations and wish to keep on generalizing is fairly clear; it comes—no one, surely, will be surprised—in the form of a generalization: Always seek the general and never quite trust it. If you don't think this makes any sense, just put another record on the stereo—make it something with a driving beat—and turn it up loud so that you don't have to think about it. We, I regret to say, have nothing to talk about.

My Father

HARRY WALSH

He is a wolf
that lit out
for the high timber
at first sight of me
rounding out his wife's belly.
But it didn't take too many
tough winters
to drive his range
downward
to the sheep.
My mother's breath
on my neck
is the name
I know him best by
on mornings
when I could freeze
dark the windows
with a whisper,
watching
for just a sight
of him passing.

HARRY WALSH works on a tugboat from the port of New York and has been a professional fisherman.

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Plagiary

PETER SHAW

IN THE PAST FEW YEARS a number of prominent writers have been accused of plagiarism, among them Norman Mailer (for his first book on Marilyn Monroe), Alex Haley (for *Roots*), John Gardner (for a biography of Chaucer), Dee Brown (for *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*), Penelope Gilliatt (for her *New Yorker* profile of Graham Greene), Ken Follett (for his spy novel, *The Key to Rebecca*), and Gail Sheehy (for *Passages*). More recently, Martin Amis, the son of Kingsley Amis, charged that his 1973 novel, *The Rachel Papers*, had been plagiarized by Jacob Epstein, a twenty-three-year-old first novelist.

As far as one can tell, none of these writers suffered from the resultant publicity. Instead, a universal reluctance to render judgment meant that even those of them who confessed were never publicly disgraced. As Edgar Allan Poe was the first to observe, "When a plagiarism is detected, it generally happens that the public sympathy is with the plagiarist." It can be added that most of the embarrassment in such cases is ordinarily experienced not so much by the accused as by those who have been confronted by his deed. Thus reporters and editorialists tend to replace the word "plagiarism" with uneasy euphemisms. *Newsweek*, for example, put it that Alex Haley "acknowledged *lifting* modest portions of *Roots*"; that the film critic Penelope Gilliatt was caught "appropriating another author's eloquence"; and that John Gardner "was discovered to have *borrowed lavishly*" (all italics added).

After an initial flurry of discussion, most charges of plagiarism tend to disappear from public view. If a suit and trial follow, the result is usually a private, unrecorded settlement, part of which is an agreement not to publicize the outcome. The writings in question remain extant, of course, but no one is eager to evaluate them.

The contrast could not be sharper between the literary world's failure to render judgment and the draconian code imposed by the scientific community. When Dr. Vijay Soman was recently discovered to have plagiarized some sixty words in a medical paper, for example, he was forced to resign his position at Yale University. Soman, it is true, was at first given only a mild rebuke. But the persistence of the researcher who

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had accused him led to an investigation in which it developed that he had faked data in addition to plagiarizing, and as a result he was asked to leave.

Later, Soman's superior, Dr. Philip Felig, had to resign his recent appointment as chairman of the department of medicine at Columbia's College of Physicians and Surgeons. Although Dr. Felig was not himself accused of either plagiarism or faking data, the people who had interviewed him for the Columbia chairmanship felt in retrospect that he had kept his faith in Soman for too long a time and had given a too generous account of Soman's improprieties. Dr. Felig was eventually rehired, but by Yale, not Columbia.

To be sure, one senses in Dr. Felig's delayed response the same reluctance to come to terms with the problem as that displayed by humanists. In numerous cases of scientific plagiarism and fraud over the past few years, as Alan F. Westin of Columbia University has shown, the perpetrators have suffered less than those who exposed them. When a plagiarism is detected, it seems, the public's sympathy for the plagiarist is often matched by its disapproval of the victim. Nevertheless, even the most reluctant authorities cannot avoid taking action when science is in question, whereas in literary studies it is possible to avoid the unpleasant responsibility of dealing with a breach of ethics.

This avoidance would seem to be related to the attacks on literary standards that have come from various sources in recent years. One school of literary critics, for example, has argued that all professional literary interpretations are merely subjective, so that no critic or criticism is really any better than any other. Another school has seized on a contention put forward by the critic Harold Bloom, who maintains that poets are so much influenced by their predecessors, unconsciously as well as consciously, that no poet can be called original. Commenting on Bloom's list of six ways in which influence supposedly exerts itself in poetry, one sympathetic scholar, Thomas McFarland, has logically suggested that "he might have added a seventh, 'plagiarism.' "

McFarland elsewhere voices the "hope" that modern relativism has so far freed us from the "rigid certainties of Victorian moralism" as to make it no longer necessary to be terribly concerned about plagiarism. In contrast, it was not very long ago that a historian of the subject could still regard plagiarism as both a moral and a cultural issue. In *Literary Ethics* (1928), H. M. Paull posited the importance of knowing the extent to which plagiarism is being practiced at a given time. Furthermore, "the extent to which it is condoned," he argued, "is a still more valuable indication of the state of the literary conscience of the period."

Currently, the tendency in the literary world is either to deny or to extenuate the commission of plagiarism. Where the act in a given

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instance proves to be too overt to be denied, it is typically described as an exception—a plagiarism by technicality only. In effect, plagiarism has come to be regarded as a relative phenomenon—one to which disgrace no longer attaches. Writers have always plagiarized, it is said. Shakespeare and other greats, we are reminded, explicitly justified themselves with the concept of "imitation," by which writers were positively encouraged to model their works on those of their predecessors. In accusing Jacob Epstein of plagiarism, Martin Amis himself, for reasons that will appear, softened his indictment by remarking that "the boundary between influence and plagiarism will always be vague." All in all it begins to seem that plagiarism amounts to no more than the invidious relabeling of practices that were once perfectly acceptable.

How much, in fact, has the definition of plagiarism changed through history? At present, plagiarism is defined as the wrongful taking of and representing as one's own the ideas, words, or inventions of another. In the ancient world and through the neoclassical period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, imitation was admittedly the prescribed mode of composition. Writers were expected to adopt models for their work and to follow these with regard to plot, characters, and even versification and expression. It was only with the Romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that originality came to be valued over imitation. Not surprisingly, concern about plagiarism greatly increased during the Romantic period and continued, along with the high valuation of originality, down to the quite recent past.

Yet it does not follow, as some have argued, that plagiarism is a strictly modern concept. The poet Martial complained of being plagiarized from in the first century A.D. The term *plagiary* itself entered the English language in the sixteenth century, along with bitter accusations by writers against one another. The concept of plagiarism, therefore, existed alongside that of imitation, so that there have always been acceptable and unacceptable modes of using the work of one's predecessors. What has not changed through time is the ethic of borrowing. Throughout history the act of using the work of another *with an intent to deceive* has been branded as plagiarism. As Lord Chesterfield pithily phrased it in the eighteenth century, a plagiarist is "a man that steals other people's thoughts and puts 'em off for his own."

There will always remain certain gray areas resistant to definition. Not every act of copying from another author is the same, for example, since a wider latitude is traditionally allowed for imitating authors of the past. This was the case with Shakespeare's use of Plutarch, and also with John Updike in an example cited by *Newsweek* as evidence that plagiarism is virtually universal among writers. "Even John Updike," *Newsweek* noted, "recalls comfortingly that 'my first published novel

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was very clearly an imitation of Henry James.' " Yet one can imagine Updike's following his well-known, virtually classical model as closely, say, as Joyce followed the *Odyssey* in *Ulysses* without raising any question of plagiarism. On the other hand, equally extensive, unacknowledged use of a contemporary's work—with the intent to deceive—would have to be labeled plagiarism.

When one turns to recently publicized accusations of plagiarism, the authors' explanations at first seem to support the notion that plagiarism cannot be satisfactorily defined. For example, Alex Haley was sued by two novelists, Margaret Walker Alexander and Harold Courlander, the latter the author of *The African*. Haley swore that he had not read *The African* but admitted that three passages from it had "found their way" into *Roots*. Jacob Epstein was more forthright about the accusation that he had taken more than fifty passages from Martin Amis's novel. But though Epstein freely admitted having "taken another writer's imagery and language for my novel" (*Wild Oats*, 1979), he blamed his doing so on faulty record keeping. Similarly, when Dee Brown was accused of improperly taking materials (for *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* in fourteen separate instances) from the historian Lawrence Kelly, he admitted only that "six sentences were taken from Kelly, and omission of the source was an oversight of the typist."

Both Haley and Epstein said that they had collected passages in notebooks without keeping track of where they came from. Then, long after copying them out, they had inadvertently used them in their books. Haley said that he used notebooks containing passages originally copied by his research assistants as well as by himself. Epstein added that he himself had discovered his borrowings after publication, and had in fact removed thirteen of them from the second American edition of his novel.

All of these cases at first appear to offer insuperable problems of definition—until it is noticed that each of the explanations contains an admission of wrongdoing. Those accused do not actually deny that plagiarism took place; instead, they suggest that extenuating circumstances should make us hesitate to render judgment. At issue, they in effect argue, are nothing but a few inadvertent, unconscious slips. Thus if there was plagiarism, it was not extensive and it was not intended.

Can plagiarism take place inadvertently, unconsciously? Certainly every writer worries that he may unconsciously be echoing, or even repeating, phrases or ideas that have somehow stuck in his mind. Similarly, researchers fear that inadvertent mistakes in footnoting may have resulted in their failure to credit all of their sources properly. The feeling that one may unconsciously be a sinner oneself makes writers especially hesitant to pronounce judgment on other writers who have been accused of plagiarism. But while it is theoretically possible for

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anyone to breach the rules inadvertently, for the most part the incompletely or improperly attributed passages in the working author's manuscript somehow are caught by the time his work sees print. It may happen that an observer will later point out an uncredited idea or phrase, but there will be no implication of plagiarism.

This is because an accusation of plagiarism normally arises only where there has been a *pattern* of improper conduct. Practically speaking, authors are sued, not for single acts of plagiarism, though technically they could be, but for having committed *dozens* of such acts. Any one failure to acknowledge a source might be defended, were it not that the pattern of which it is a part points to an intent to deceive. Accordingly, the accused plagiarist, along with offering excuses, ordinarily proceeds to reduce the number of instances of wrongdoing that he has been accused of. Thus Haley reduced Courlander's "more than eighty passages" to three; Dee Brown reduced fourteen to six; Epstein reduced more than forty to thirteen. The writers plagiarized from—reasoning that, having extracted a confession of plagiarism, they have no need to quibble—often silently agree to the reduced number. At this point, the two or three or six instances can again begin to present a problem of definition—unless the larger pattern from which they have been cut is remembered.

When that pattern is kept in mind, one notices, for example, that it does not matter exactly when Jacob Epstein copied passages from Martin Amis's novel into his notebook. In the case of Amis's passage containing a reference to the English advice-columnist, Marje Proops, Amis had written: "I always tried to look tranquil, approachable, full of dear-Marje wisdom." Epstein changed this to read, "Billy . . . tried to appear sensible and approachable, full of Ann Landers wisdom, but with no result." (The passages are taken from Amis's article in the London *Observer*.) If Epstein made the substitution while copying from his notebook to the manuscript of his novel, the English columnist's name would have had to identify the passage to him as not being his own. If he substituted the American columnist's name as he copied from Amis to his notebook, it can only have been with the intent to plagiarize.

Not only are multiple plagiarisms within a single book common, but it frequently turns out that the plagiarist will eventually violate some other literary or extraliterary rule. The disputed meaning of Dr. Vijay Soman's six plagiarized sentences, for example, was suddenly clarified when his faked data were exposed. In the same way, the charge of plagiarism against Alex Haley took on a different coloration when it was followed by a serious charge that Haley had faked *his* data.

In a recent discussion of scientific fraud in the *New York Times*, Dr. Elliott Osserman of Columbia University's College of Physicians

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and Surgeons remarked: "One goes on a presumption of honesty for the first time. If a given investigator has been suspect in his previous work, then I think it's a whole new ball game. Once suspect, always suspect."

It was difficult not to take this attitude in a recent case in which John Gardner was charged with plagiarism in what appears to have been an unfair manner. Some years ago a scholarly reviewer of Gardner's *Life and Times of Chaucer* had pointed out in *Speculum*, the journal of medieval studies, that Gardner "frequently"—and properly—cited the well-known authority, *England in the Fourteenth Century* by May McKisack. In numerous instances, however, Gardner copied long passages nearly verbatim from the same book without any acknowledgment. There could be no doubt that Gardner understood and accepted the conventions of attribution. Yet in the passages in question he copied McKisack in "close paraphrase"—that is, with slight variations of phraseology—without providing either footnotes or any other hint of what he was doing.

Here what at first might appear as a case too full of anomalies to be comprehensible actually fits two typical patterns. First there is the repeated use of and even oblique identification of a single, prominent book (though Gardner used other books in the same alternatingly proper and improper manner, according to the *Speculum* review). In such cases an odd but unmistakable tendency toward self-incrimination makes itself apparent. Secondly it develops that another charge of wrongdoing arises some years later. In such cases an objective observer cannot help but cast a jaundiced eye back on the *first* charge.

Initially, most observers find it difficult to believe that clues strewn about in an obvious manner can be anything but misguided attempts to give proper credit. Indeed, the cover-up is usually so flimsy that the term *plagiarism* hardly seems appropriate. Surely, it appears, the particular charge of improper copying that happens to have come one's way must represent some kind of exception. The truth, though, is that plagiarism remains what it is no matter how inexplicable the manner in which it may have been carried out.

As it develops, giving the game away proves to be the rule rather than the exception among plagiarists. Both in the commission of the original act and in the fantastic excuses that follow it, plagiarism is often calculated above all to result in detection. Though the means vary, one or another kind of hint, slip, or other suspicious gesture usually manages to call attention to the improper act. And here the common excuse that the act was unconscious offers a clue to the operative psychology. What was unconscious, it seems evident, was not the plagiaristic act itself, the deceptions surrounding which testify to a plentiful awareness of what was being done, but rather the desire to be caught. Martin Amis called

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the hints that give away the plagiarist a kind of honesty. He speculated that Jacob Epstein "in some half-conscious way, was too honest not to give a clue to his own imposture. Plagiarism is one of his book's principal themes."

Odd as it may seem, Amis's attack on Epstein itself fits into the category of inadvertent, yet somehow purposeful, self-exposure. For the fact is that Amis's own novel, *The Rachel Papers*, from which Jacob Epstein is alleged to have plagiarized, also contains the theme of plagiarism. One of the features borrowed from Amis by Epstein has to do precisely with this theme. Epstein followed Amis in making his hero what could be described as a verbal plagiarist: in both books the central character has the habit of collecting impressive things to say to girls. Amis's hero, who memorizes and repeats the words of others, is eventually caught committing a genuine plagiarism. On an English literature admissions paper he pretends that two phrases he has memorized from well-known critics are his own, and he cleverly applies these to the authors he has been assigned to write on.

Amis, too, it appears, is telling something both about plagiarism and about himself through the use of this theme in his novel. For in the course of exposing Epstein, he obliquely admitted to two plagiaristic acts of his own. In the first instance, Amis revealed that one of the phrases copied from him by Jacob Epstein actually came from Dickens. Closely following Amis, Epstein had described a man's hair as appearing like "two gray-colored, wiry wings on either side of his otherwise hairless head." Amis explained: "I am something of an idiom-magpie myself—to a reprehensible extent, perhaps. That bit about 'wiry wings,' for instance, was stolen by me from Dickens: Podsnap in *Our Mutual Friend* has 'two little light-coloured wiry wings, one on either side of his else bald head.' "

So disarming was Amis's manner that no one seems to have noticed that his revelation about the source of the "wiry wings," together with the following passage, amounted to a public confession: "I once lifted a whole paragraph of mesmeric jargon from J. G. Ballard's *The Drowned World*, and was reproved by the publisher via an alert Ballard fan. In fact, I had belatedly got verbal permission from Mr. Ballard, who is a friend and colleague. But the lapse was evidence of laziness, and a kind of moral torpor." Amis failed to specify exactly what kind of moral torpor was involved, but it can be observed that he claimed only a "belated" securing of permission. All in all it would be hard to improve on Amis's own conclusion that "the psychology of plagiarism is fascinatingly perverse: it risks, or invites, a deep shame, and there must be something of the death wish in it."

And yet it is not quite enough to speak of a death wish or some other

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psychological mechanism at the heart of plagiarism—any more than it is enough to demonstrate that the act can be satisfactorily defined and evaluated. For even as one calls for humanists to emulate the objectivity of scientists in dealing with plagiarism, one cannot help sympathizing with their reluctance to deal with the problem of plagiarism.

Such reluctance itself, in fact, can be shown to represent a part of the psychology of plagiarism. That psychology begins with the plagiarist's act of stealing material of the sort that his talent and intelligence would appear to make unnecessary for him. There follows his strewing of clues to bring about detection. After detection, the plagiarist offers excuses that testify to the unconscious motivation of his original act, though ordinarily without acknowledging either its breach of ethics or its obvious self-destructiveness. Finally there comes the sympathetic reaction of the public mentioned by Poe, followed by uneasiness, ambiguity, and eventual abdication of responsibility on the part of those called upon to render judgment.

Not all of this is unique to plagiarism. Similarly self-destructive behavior characterizes the social crime that plagiarism most closely resembles. This is kleptomania. The plagiarist resembles the kleptomaniac both in his evident wish to be detected and in the circumstance that what is stolen may not be needed. (With kleptomania, lack of need, we are told, is absolutely central.) Because kleptomania so evidently issues from an uncontrollable compulsion, furthermore, it tends, like plagiarism, to inspire understanding and sympathy. The comparison, though, stops here. For kleptomania does not result in any confusion over whether or not goods were stolen.

There is something at once fascinating and repellent about both of these acts. The normal response to them tends to be an instinctive recoil accompanied by a shudder of uneasiness or an uncomfortable feeling in the pit of the stomach. These are reactions that resemble nothing so much as the experience of the uncanny. In novels and short stories the uncanny is often conveyed through a character who is first mesmerized by some horrible apparition or evil deed and then overcome by an urge to flee. (Henry James's "The Jolly Corner" is such a story.) Freud pointed out that a reaction comparable to the one represented in such fictions is sometimes experienced in real life when we encounter psychological disturbance in others. In such cases, he wrote, the ordinary person has seen "the workings of forces hitherto unsuspected in his fellow-man but which at the same time he is dimly aware of in a remote corner of his own being."

In contrast to the uneasy responses of ordinary people to plagiarism, plagiarists themselves tend to be unequivocal. For example, modern scholarship has revealed that Edgar Allan Poe was a plagiarist—most

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dramatically in his book-length fiction *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. Yet Poe himself regarded plagiarism as a "detestable" act and a "sickening spectacle." Similarly, Jacob Epstein, in his novel, treated a waffling response to plagiarism as a form of weakness. When the minor character, Professor Russo, who knows all about the "racket" of selling term papers, discovers that he has been handed two such papers, he ruminates: "Who the hell am I to set myself up as some moral paragon, as if I know right from wrong." Russo's failure publicly to expose his two student plagiarists is viewed by the narrator with contempt.

Plagiarists also tend to suffer from the delusion that they have been plagiarized from. Poe exhibited a perfect obsession on this point as with the subject of plagiarism in general. Over the years he collected materials for a book to be entitled "Chapter on American Cribbage," in which he planned to expose his contemporaries. His essay "Mr. Longfellow and Other Plagiarists" was full of wild accusations against some of America's most respected literary figures. The existence of a class of people, some plagiarists themselves, who spread false charges of plagiarism enormously complicates the problem, for the fear of being associated with false accusers often makes those whose work has actually been plagiarized from hesitate to say so.

Just as plagiarists differ from apologists in their moral attitudes toward plagiarism, so do they differ in being attracted to, rather than repelled by, the uncanniness of the subject. The scholar Burton R. Pollin showed that Poe, for his *Arthur Gordon Pym*, plagiarized from the travel book *A Narrative of Four Voyages* by Benjamin Morrell. Unbeknownst to Poe, this book, which was actually in large part the work of a ghostwriter, contained many faked incidents. Uncannily, one might say, Poe relied "heavily" on the very material that Morrell and his ghostwriters had "borrowed." More recently, according to the *New York Times*, a writing instructor at San Diego State University belatedly discovered that a student had plagiarized the entire Janet Cooke Pulitzer Prize story, "Jimmy's World." Unaccountably—uncannily—the student had fastened on this particular story *before* it was exposed as an imposture.

Perhaps the most important and instructive case of plagiarism in English is that of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who was first exposed as a plagiarist immediately after his death in 1834. During the next century and a quarter, a series of studies revealed that Coleridge had doggedly committed plagiarism from the beginning until the end of his career, in both obscure instances and in connection with some of his best known and most influential works, especially those in literary criticism. Coleridge's stature as a poet is shaken, but not destroyed, by these revela-

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tions. This is because his reputation rests on a very few poems written over a short span of time. Although many of his other poems were plagiarized, his three great works—"Kubla Khan," "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and "Christabel"—cannot be called plagiarisms. But Coleridge's reputation rests almost equally on his literary criticism, most notably his *Biographia Literaria* and his lectures on Shakespeare. And these writings contain particularly extensive plagiarism, including some of the passages for which Coleridge is most famous.

Surprisingly, it was not until the appearance of Norman Fruman's *Coleridge, the Damaged Archangel* in 1971 that any of this became a serious issue. Today the general reading public remains for the most part unaware that Coleridge was a plagiarist, while literary critics and professors of English—outside of those who specialize in the study of Romantic poetry—are largely unaware of the extent and significance of his plagiarism. The manner in which the present state of ignorance came about bears directly on the literary world's current unwillingness to deal with contemporary cases of plagiarism.

Norman Fruman's study reflected badly on scholars of Romanticism. Its information had long been available to them, as he pointed out, yet they rarely confronted it. Fruman remarked in the introduction to his book: "Except for a few lonely dissenters, the overwhelming majority of authorities in the field dismiss the charges of plagiarism and intellectual dependence against Coleridge as mistaken, or, at best, so partial a truth as to be grossly misleading."

Thomas McFarland was one such authority. His *Coleridge and the Pantheist Tradition* (1969) contained a chapter entitled "The Problem of Coleridge's Plagiarisms," which amounted to a compendium of scholarly defenses of Coleridge. Writing a short time before Fruman, McFarland observed that, in twentieth-century discussions of Coleridge, "there has been a curious and very widespread tendency to gloss over, and even to suppress, the fact of the plagiarisms." Nevertheless, he himself attempted to make the charge of plagiarism appear absurd, and he proceeded to cast aspersions on those who made it. His arguments, it is worth noting, have reappeared in the writings of apologists in connection with several recent cases of plagiarism.

McFarland's defense of Coleridge displayed an evident ignorance of typical plagiaristic practices. Thus, where Coleridge plagiarized from some of the very works that he mentioned, McFarland satisfied himself by asking rhetorically why Coleridge would be "determined to help his accusers by supplying the names of both the author and the book to which he is indebted." To be sure, this was before the appearance of John Gardner's book on Chaucer. But as a scholar of English Romanticism, McFarland should have known that earlier, in 1965, Albert

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Goldman, in *The Mine and the Mint*, had shown that Coleridge's contemporary, Thomas De Quincey, yet another plagiarist, had followed exactly the same pattern. In fact, Coleridge's case exhibited the typical anomalies of plagiarism—from guilt-ridden, self-incriminating gestures in the commission of the act, to a tainted exposer, to professional apologists, and finally to a highly moralistic attitude on the part of the plagiarist himself toward the very crime secretly being committed.

Coleridge—as McFarland noted—gave himself away "by using the words 'concealment' and 'plagiarism' " (a circumstance that McFarland found indicative of a confident innocence in Coleridge). Furthermore, Coleridge devoted himself to accusations of plagiarism in others. "It is doubtful," Fruman wrote, "whether any other writer in the history of letters has accused so many writers of plagiarism, and so many so falsely." It was altogether fitting, therefore, that Coleridge should have been first exposed by another plagiarist, Thomas De Quincey, and that he himself should have entertained an honest affinity for the works of still another plagiarist, the Polish poet, Casimir. Coleridge revered and openly imitated Casimir without suspecting what has only recently been revealed about him—that Casimir in turn had " 'stolen *en bloc* and without acknowledgment from a contemporary Italian' the world-famous series of poems called the *Silviludia*." (Whereas Coleridge is known to have imitated Casimir, it is not yet known if he plagiarized from him as well.)

In McFarland's view, what called for analysis in Coleridge's case was not his plagiarisms themselves but rather the fact that a succession of nineteenth-century critics should have chosen to publicize them. He pointed out that several of the critics in question were Scottish, and theorized that their interest in the subject derived from "the traditional antipathy of the Scots toward the English." McFarland commented in particular on the exposures made by the Scot, J. C. Ferrier, regarding plagiarism in Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*. McFarland wrote: "While on the one hand it is impossible not to be impressed by the relentless documentation of Coleridge's pilfering, on the other it is surprising and rather anti-climactic to find that when the firing is over Ferrier has discovered no more than nineteen pages of plagiarism in the hundreds that make up the *Biographia Literaria*." If nineteen pages are anticlimactic, it is not clear what would have impressed McFarland in the circumstances—twenty-one pages copied? Twenty-five? Fifty? Nor is it clear what McFarland would have made of Ferrier's case had he been, say, a Turk.

But the point is that McFarland was hardly alone in his tortured apologetics. When Fruman's book appeared two years after McFarland's, scholarly reviewers made no mention of their failure to have dealt

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forthrightly with Coleridge's plagiarisms. Instead, they dismissed Fruman for being "trivial" and "presumptuous." On the other hand, the same reviewers had to admit that Fruman's book was "formidably . . . well documented" (L. C. Knights), "thorough, well-written and well-documented" (Owen Barfield), and "carefully proofread" (Thomas McFarland, with perhaps a hint of regret). In the end, rather than deal with the case put by Fruman, these otherwise intelligent, even distinguished, critics preferred to accept the propositions that lack of need proves the absence of theft and that outright, unconcealed plagiarism proves the absence of plagiarism.

Inasmuch as these attitudes have spread out beyond the academy, it is worth recalling their intellectual origins in the Romantic doctrine of originality—a subject that has been of special interest to both Harold Bloom and Thomas McFarland. If the spectacular cases of Coleridge and De Quincey represented a kind of hysterical revolt against the tyranny of originality, then one can speculate on the phenomenon of sympathy for this revolt among modern specialists of Romanticism. Romantic refusal to be fettered by rules, it can be said, finds its modern equivalent in a relativistic questioning of the rules themselves by these specialists. In this perspective it makes sense that the scholar who wished the world free from the rigid certainties of Victorian moralism should have been Thomas McFarland himself. And it follows that McFarland should have gone on to conclude of Coleridge that "if translating some pages from his German contemporaries was his worst and blackest fault, then surely he was a prince among men."

At all times, to belittle a breach of professional ethics is to belittle one's profession itself. But in a period such as the present, when there is considerable doubt about the importance and dignity of humane letters, the refusal to render judgment has particularly unfortunate results. Today it is difficult to imagine a plagiaristic act, or indeed any other breach of literary ethics, that would go undefended. It hardly seems an accident that along with this particular devolution, literature, in general, went from a position where it could claim for itself the highest morality to one in which many are claiming that it is no more than a marginal entertainment.

A vendetta against plagiarists will hardly set things right again. The specific harms that plagiarism may cause are, after all, of far less importance than the act's threat to the moral climate of literature. It is therefore on this level that the problem should be addressed. Where there is an injured party, or where professional advancement over others has been gained through the employment of plagiarism, the issue must be brought out into the open. But where no one has been hurt, those privy to the circumstances, usually the plagiarist's colleagues and peers,

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ought to be counted on to inflict punishment enough with their personal disapproval.

Such an approach can be effective, however, only so long as the steady judgment of contemporaries and the objectivity of history can be counted on. While private judgment remains confused and scholars continue to treat literary wrongdoing as they have Coleridge's, there can be no confidence in the private handling of plagiarism. As long as such confidence is lacking, more and more cases are likely to be dragged into the courts and given wide publicity. Thus it is that the attempt to evade professional responsibility when a case of plagiarism arises only makes for further complications.

Ideally, plagiarism ought to be treated as one of those areas, like manners, where the enforcement of right behavior belongs to society at large. Given the present situation, it seems clear that literary critics and scholars must bear the responsibility to affirm that there is indeed such a thing as plagiarism and that they are capable of identifying it if necessary. When they come into contact with a charge of plagiarism, moreover, they must accept the responsibility to determine whether or not literary norms have been violated. With literary standards thus reasserted, it may become possible once again for the general opinion quietly to settle most cases of plagiarism by itself.

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Fates of the Expressionists

MICHAEL HOFMANN

The Kaiser was the first cousin of George V,
descended, as he was, from *German* George,
and unhappy Albert, the hard-working Saxon Elector.
—The relaxed, navy-cut beard of the one,
hysterical, bristling moustaches of the other . . .
The Expressionists were Rupert Brooke's generation.
Their hold on life was weaker than a baby's.
Their deaths, at whatever age, were infant mortality—
a bad joke in this century. Suddenly become sleepy,
they dropped like flies, whimsical, sizzling,
ecstatic, from a hot light bulb. Even before the War,
Georg Heym and a friend died in a skating accident.
From 1914, they died in battle and of disease—
or suicide like Trakl. *Drugs Alcohol Little Sister.*
One was a student at Oxford and died, weeks later,
on the other side. . . . Later, they ran from the Nazis.
Benjamin was turned back at the Spanish border—
his history of the streets of Paris unfinished—
deflected into an autistic suicide. In 1938,
Odön von Horváth, author of naturalistic comedies,
was struck by a falling tree. In Paris.
At the time
my anthology was compiled, there were still a few left:
unexplained survivors,
psychoanalysts in the New World.

MICHAEL HOFMANN is a postgraduate at Cambridge University whose poems have appeared widely in British journals.

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Breakup

A Memoir

LIONEL ABEL

THERE ARE INTELLECTUALS, any number of them, in New York City today, but is there any one group of them able to speak for the others? I have had reasons for seriously doubting that there is, ever since one evening in 1955.

An evening in the Big Town that was indeed a Big-Town evening in its animation and futility! But let me first sketch the political background of it: Boris Pasternak, awarded the Nobel Prize in Stockholm, had been denied permission by Soviet authorities to go to Sweden to be honored for his work. Moreover, his novel, *Doctor Zhivago*, for which he had been given the Nobel award, was denied publication by the Soviet government. Under these circumstances it seemed perfectly proper for politically interested intellectuals in New York to send the Soviet government a letter of protest. (This our own press would have published, whatever the Russian response.) Surely, I thought, there was no great problem here. One had only to bring together a sampling of the New York writers who had expressed political views over the years and had in the past been critical of Soviet policies. At least that was how it seemed to me. I consulted Meyer Schapiro, and we agreed to suggest to some writers of our acquaintance that we meet to discuss the kind of protest that would be appropriate.

Here are some of the writers we invited: Dwight Macdonald, Mary McCarthy (she was then living in New York), Harold Rosenberg, William Phillips of *Partisan Review* (Philip Rahv was then in Boston), Paul Goodman, Hannah Arendt, Eric Bentley, Stanley Plastrik of *Dissent* (Irving Howe was then living in California). To be sure, we did not invite every single writer or scholar whom we knew to be living in New York. But the ones we did invite were certainly representative; moreover, they were persons who had seen each other with some regularity over the years and had participated, on other occasions, in common

LIONEL ABEL, critic and playwright, is the author of the play *Absalom*, which in 1956 was awarded the first Obie given by the *Village Voice*, and of the book *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form*. The above essay is a chapter from his forthcoming book, *The Intellectual Follies: 1929–1982*.

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actions. They were not the only intellectuals in New York, but without them, could one say there was an intelligentsia?

We did not invite those intellectuals on the Committee for Cultural Freedom who had taken what I considered to be a cold-war position toward the Soviet Union. The position I took, with Schapiro's support, and which I presented at the meeting, was this: The Republic of Letters was indeed a reality, if not an actually existing entity. This republic, of which Pasternak was an especially honored member, was not itself a signatory of either the NATO agreements or the Warsaw Pact. We were making our appeal as citizens of this republic on behalf of a fellow citizen.

Joseph Buttinger had offered us a whole floor of his town house on East Eighty-seventh Street, and he had agreed to chair our meeting. Just a word about Mr. Buttinger, who is quite well known in left-wing intellectual circles. An Austrian worker with Socialist convictions, he had married a cultivated American woman of great wealth; she was sympathetic to left-wing causes, which the couple often backed. I am told they were very generous to Ortega y Gasset when he was in exile, and I know that Mr. Buttinger has been helpful to *Dissent*. I had visited the Buttingers once before, at their apartment on Central Park West, where they had hosted a party for *Dissent*, and I remember being struck by their library, which was just extraordinary, and also by the availability of the books, which Mr. Buttinger generously offered to lend to anyone present at the party. By 1955, though, the Buttingers had left their apartment for the more grandiose town house on Eighty-seventh Street. Mr. Buttinger, needless to say, did not abandon his books. They now occupied the whole ground floor of the new town house, and if you wanted to borrow one of them, you had to discuss the matter with a librarian. In fact, if you wanted a book you had to apply first of all for a card, just as in the public libraries. The date of your borrowing would be duly stamped, the book taken noted, and you might be asked, if need be, not to keep it beyond a certain date. There were many more books on the shelves, as I remember, and every single one was less accessible than formerly. Such was the march of progress in the Buttinger household, hardly differing in that respect from the movement of things in the world outside.

(To be sure, there were reasons for controlling the coming and going of the Buttinger books. People who are not forced to sign on the dotted line when they borrow a book tend, the Buttingers had found, not to return it, thus depriving others, who would also like the pleasure of not signing up for a book, of just this privilege. So what is one to do in such a case? The Buttingers had in fact done the sensible thing. They indexed the books, hired a librarian, gave their prospective book borrowers cards,

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and quite broke my heart when I arrived that evening in 1955 and saw what had occurred. Mr. Buttinger had, of course, also limited his own freedom. He could no longer say to a friend who wanted a book: "Take it; it's downstairs." Yes, of course the book was downstairs, or at least might be there. But wherever it was, it wasn't any longer Buttinger's; it now belonged to his library.)

The new order of the Buttinger library gave me my first shock in an evening full of crossed purposes. Here I want to describe briefly the main actors in the drama that was to follow. I shall begin with Paul Goodman who was, I think, the only one we invited who represented a generally dissenting policy with regard to the Pasternak affair. Others raised difficulties about what Meyer Schapiro and I proposed, but I think Paul had come *politically* prepared to make trouble for any such proposal. Here is my speculation as to why.

Goodman was, at that moment in his career, just on the point of becoming famous, but without the knowledge that this was about to happen. Lack of adequate fame, which is to say a fame extending beyond small circles of admirers, had made him irritable for years, and especially irritable in small groups where he was well known. I believe he was aware at that time that either a consistently anti-Communist or—what was almost the same—a pro-American-government attitude would prevent any writer from being taken up by the young. Maybe Paul was even more intuitive than I am suggesting and, looking into the future, was able to read there that, to combat American military policy in Southeast Asia successfully, one would have to make some kind of alliance with the pro-Communists among the young. Let's grant him the best of motives. In any case, he had certainly come prepared to sabotage any kind of action on behalf of Pasternak.

As he took his seat among us, he announced for all to hear that he had not read *Doctor Zhivago* and had no intention of reading it. Then he said, "Pasternak can read me." When the first suggestion was put forward that we draft a letter of protest to the Soviet government, Paul indicated that he would sign no such letter. Why not? This was the reason he gave: Coming from us, such a protest would be in bad faith, for we had not protested the refusal of a moving-picture house in Hicksville, Long Island, to show a recent Charlie Chaplin film that made fun of American anti-communism. "Where were we when this film was denied a showing?" Paul wanted to know. "Where were we?" Mary McCarthy countered. "We were certainly not in Hicksville." She had never been there, had no intention of going there, and just because she hadn't gone to Hicksville did not mean that Pasternak should not be allowed to go to Stockholm. But, as I found on other occasions, a witticism was not going to stop Paul when he felt himself deeply committed. He had two other

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objections to our projected protests: first, we had done nothing for James Joyce during the twenties when *Ulysses* was banned; and second, he thought that in banning the publication of certain books, the Soviet leaders showed a respect for literature that American politicians lacked. Miss McCarthy responded, "Then hadn't a certain respect been shown for literature in the banning of *Ulysses*?" Returning to the matter of the Chaplin film, she added that, in her opinion, anyone who had respect for Chaplin would not want to live in Hicksville, so why should the film have been shown there? This remark of hers was interpreted by Dwight Macdonald, who was sitting next to me, as an indication that from now on Paul Goodman was fair game; and after that, whatever Paul said, Dwight attacked.

In fact, Dwight did have something against Paul: an article in *Dissent* in which Goodman had described Dwight as a man who thought with his typewriter. To complicate matters, Dwight that evening was also involved in a running battle with Harold Rosenberg, who had called him a philistine in *Dissent* for his views on contemporary art. I think Dwight must have felt that night that Harold was politically allied with Paul and that he would have to do battle with both. But I must say that on this particular evening Rosenberg said little—which was most unusual—and made no really signal contribution to the chaos of our meeting.

In addition to the Macdonald-Goodman conflict, there was Mary McCarthy's feud with me. We had always had friendly relations, and I did admire most of her writings, though not her ventures in dramatic criticism. When she attacked Eugene O'Neill's reputation, remarking that he was not only incapable of writing an entire play but also incapable of composing a single good sentence, I did a piece against her in the *New Leader* in which I indicated that O'Neill was certainly the best of our playwrights, and Miss McCarthy was just as certainly not our best dramatic critic. When she swept into the Buttinger living room, Miss McCarthy told me in the roundest terms that she had come not merely to pay tribute to Pasternak but also to tell me I should have informed her I was breaking off relations with her before I published a piece critical of her views. I replied, as I poured a drink for her from Mr. Buttinger's excellent stock, that I believed in the manners observed in Parliament, where a member attacks an opponent roundly and then exchanges compliments with him or her over drinks. Mary, though, thought this was not a matter of manners but of morals, and she let me know she would do her best to cross me all evening.

As for Hannah Arendt, she was not opposed, of course, to helping Pasternak, but she was doubtful that our intervention would help him. This was a serious consideration, and even now it is something everyone must think of who is concerned with helping the Russian dissidents. The

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dissidents insist, and have insisted all along, that American intervention helps them; but of course such intervention has to be properly timed, properly stated, and, as we have seen from the fate of Scharansky, may well be counterproductive. In any case, Miss Arendt urged caution upon us but had nothing more positive to suggest. As for Pasternak, she was doubtful that any statement by us could help him and quite sure that any but the most perfectly stated protest would actually hurt him; and she gave us the feeling that it was not possible for us to come up with a statement she would feel obliged to sign. At this point, practically everyone present helped himself to a drink, and Dwight, by now quite drunk, indicated that he wanted to take the floor. Mr. Buttinger, who was chairing the meeting, denied it to him. I cannot remember what his reason was, but I do remember that at the time I did not think it arbitrary. But Dwight thought it was. "Let's get another chairman," he shouted, as if another could be supplied as easily as an additional drink. He had also forgotten that Mr. Buttinger was not only our chairman but our host. As I recall, Mr. Buttinger gracefully relinquished his chair, leaving us to our own devices for contriving chaos.

And chaotic it was after he left.

Meyer Schapiro pleaded with us to try to find some measure of real agreement so that we could, at the very least, express our feeling that Pasternak deserved support. He spoke with the clarity and eloquence that had so often, in past meetings, thrilled most of those in the room. This time, though, his eloquence was unavailing.

Paul once again asserted his unwillingness to sign any statement that implied any approval of the policy of our government, most especially its policy on literary questions. Any attack on Soviet policy, he said, was an endorsement of that of its opposite number. To this I objected that the United States was without any policy in literary questions, at which point William Phillips, who had so far not intervened in the argument, took moderate issue with me and gave support to Paul's position.

I have observed William Phillips's behavior at general meetings and have noticed a certain political line he always seems to follow. During the sixties, at a meeting called by *Commentary* to discuss the civil rights movement in this country (a meeting at which James Baldwin, Nathan Glazer, Sidney Hook, and Gunnar Myrdal were the panelists), William, when he took the floor, announced, "I'm probably the only intellectual here who agrees with Jimmy Baldwin." In fact, that was not the case. There were others in the audience who did not agree with what had been said by Sidney Hook, by Gunnar Myrdal, or by Nathan Glazer, and who did agree with Baldwin's comments. At Buttinger's in 1955, William took what amounted to the same line, though he did not say, "I'm probably the only one here who agrees with Paul." What he said was,

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"I'm trying to understand what Paul has said because I would like to agree with him." Now I'm quite sure that this was a correct description of his desire; he did want to agree with Paul. For Paul was clearly the one taking a line that could be interpreted as Left. But William did not say, "I want to agree with Paul because he is taking a Left line on this." William has a certain gift for subtlety, and so he put his proposition differently, saying, "I think Paul wants us to respond as writers to the Soviet treatment of Pasternak, rather than as persons committed to a certain political line." According to William, Paul was the one who had talked like a writer, though William did not go so far as to say that he had talked in behalf of literature. What Paul had in fact said was that he did not want to defend Pasternak and that he would not criticize the Soviet government. Somehow, as William saw it, those of us who wanted to defend Pasternak—and who, by the way, unlike Paul, had actually read his novel—were not thinking as writers hoping to defend a fellow writer.

It was precisely to rule out this sort of argument that I had suggested at the outset of our meeting that we had come together as citizens of the Republic of Letters, and that it was in the name of this imaginary institution, rather than of any actually existing state, that we were determined to protest the Soviets' treatment of Boris Pasternak. What Paul Goodman had done, and what William Phillips had supported him in doing, amounted to denying that there was any such thing as a Republic of Letters. There were only states like the Soviet Union and the United States, hostile to each other, and we could not attack one of these states without giving comfort and support to its opposite number. To cap the confusion, we were now being told by William that Paul wanted us to think of ourselves as writers in what amounted to nothing less than a round denial that there was any purely literary institution to which we could say we belonged. I replied that Paul was trying to say that we were just United Staters or Soviet Staters, and that the so-called Republic of Letters was just a literary dream.

At this point somebody noticed that our host, Mr. Buttinger, had left his chair (in fact he had left it in some dudgeon) and suggested that it was only proper to invite him back. Not, however, to resume the function of chairman, Dwight insisted. Somebody said to Dwight, "You won't ask him to leave if he comes back and sits down quietly?" Somebody went to fetch Mr. Buttinger, but when asked to return, he indicated that he had had enough of our drunken shenanigans and declined.

Just two more details about the meeting. I, too, had helped myself to Mr. Buttinger's bourbon, and no doubt this had been duly noted. At one point I suggested that we propose to the leading Soviet literary journal that it publish Edmund Wilson's favorable review of *Doctor Zhivago* (which had appeared in *The New Yorker*) and, in return for this

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concession to American literary opinion, we would try to obtain publication in some leading American publication, preferably *The New Yorker*, of any critique of *Doctor Zhivago* by a Russian critic chosen by the Soviet authorities. Miss Arendt airily dismissed my suggestion. She said, "Schnapps' ideas."

When it was finally apparent that no statement would be agreed upon, the meeting broke up. It had been suggested that Harold Rosenberg write a provisional statement that would then be sent to Irving Howe for revision; but as we left the Buttinger drawing room, Eric Bentley, whom I had brought to the meeting, whispered to me, "I'll never sign a political statement edited by Irving Howe." Nor did he. And Harold Rosenberg wrote no statement, and none was presented for Irving Howe to revise. None of those present at that meeting was able to sign a statement in behalf of Pasternak. It was evident that the New York intellectuals could no longer act as a group.

What broke up our meeting? Personal rivalries? Drunkenness? Lack of seriousness? Political differences? All these, of course, played a part. But if I were to single out any one cause that was more than merely contributory to the general disorder, then it would be none of these, but something quite different. In fact, it was fear, fear of a very particular kind, which in recent times I have seen dominate many meetings, many movements, much action and inaction. What fear? The fear that what one did or said might be regarded as contrary, and even harmful, to the Left.

One must in no case do anything that might be harmful to the Left. What if the projected action seems a good one? Then one must be all the more careful. One must consider every possible consequence, even the most remote. Many actions that at first sight might seem beneficent, when looked at more closely, turn out to involve a possible damage to the Left. What Left? Which Left? Never mind. And do not ask. Indeed there is need not to ask, for the very fact that we don't know what the Left is today means that whatever it be, its situation is precarious. We don't even know what the Left is? Then we must be all the more careful of it. We must do nothing that by any stretch of imagination might be regarded as against whatever it is that remains of this Left, which we can no longer identify. And it was on this fear that Paul Goodman had played when he assailed us for not having done battle for Chaplin's film in Hicksville during the early fifties or even for Joyce's novel during the twenties, when most of those in the room were too young to know of Joyce. And it was this fear that William Phillips tried to make us feel when he said that Paul had wanted us to respond to the Pasternak affair as writers. But nobody had been invited to the Buttinger town house who could be described as anti-leftist, and almost everyone there

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wanted to be thought of as a leftist or as a supporter of the Left. Also, there was not one person in the room who then knew with any degree of clarity just what it was still possible to mean by the term *Left*. I have observed that it is in such moments of political confusion—that is, when we don't know what the Left is—that our fear of being thought against the Left is greatest.

There is reason, I believe, behind this fear of damaging the Left, even when one is not sure what the Left stands for, or might be, at any particular moment. Fear of damaging the Left may represent fear of dissolving intellectual unity, the intelligentsia, in fact, that in America in recent times has only been brought together, shaped into some kind of unity, by leftist interests. So for any readers who may judge William Phillips's behavior as I described it at the Pasternak meeting as devious or personally motivated, I want to make this clearly contrary judgment: I think William was motivated by a desire to keep the intellectuals together, and this he may very well have believed could only be done by steering clear of any action that could be interpreted as anti-Left. The fact is that the New York intelligentsia came apart simply because it could not agree that it was in the interest of anything that could be called the Left to protest Pasternak's treatment by the Russians.

In Europe, of course, there have been right-wing intelligentsias. I'm thinking, for instance, of *L'Action Francaise*. Even in this country we had, for a time at least, the grouping of southern writers led by Donald Davidson and Allen Tate. But this grouping was of only very short duration, and one of its most gifted writers, Robert Penn Warren, finally threw in his lot with more moderate intellectuals in the North. Today, of course, there are some right-wing writers grouped around the *National Review*. But generally speaking, whenever there has been any significant coherent activity by intellectuals, involving more than just a few persons, this activity has been leftist in character and motivated by left-wing interests. Why this is or should be the case I do not want to go into here. But I am sure this is the case and that it is a permanent embarrassment to the Right. In a period in which it is said that there is a conservative tide sweeping the country, and at a time, too, when leftism is in intellectual difficulty and cannot define itself clearly, it is still impossible to find any clearly articulated right-wing intelligentsia in this country—or in fact in any country in Western Europe. William Buckley's efforts have been unavailing. If there is going to be an intelligentsia of any sort, it apparently has to be left-wing.

Now why should this be the case? About twenty years back, M. Mascolo, one of the editors at Gallimard and the author of a book on communism—which he called the only interesting thing to talk about—wrote an article on the Left in *Les Temps Modernes* in which he tried to

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make what might be called a poetic analysis of leftism and its appeal. He brought up the term *gaucheur*, the French word for *southpaw*, and he associated it with the nonpolitical meaning of the French word *gauche*, meaning awkward or erratic. Now southpaw pitchers in American baseball are not always awkward or erratic, nor are such tennis stars as Jimmy Connors and John McEnroe. Yet all southpaws are expected to be erratic. It is a great surprise to us when they are not. What Mascolo suggested in his essay is that the Left is composed of *gaucheurs* or southpaws in political or social life: Jews or members of racial minorities, people who are expected to be deviant or erratic in their behavior, who do not represent the steady, sobering outlook of the center or the robust simplicities that are presented by the Right. Mascolo almost suggests that the Left is composed of individuals "sicklied over with the pale cast of thought" in counterposition to the Laerteses of this world who are on the Right.

M. Mascolo's idea of the Left as composed of *gaucheurs* may explain this surprising fact, which appeared in the press of September 4, 1978. Samuel Beckett, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Eugene Ionesco sent the following telegram to Victor Korchnoi, then engaged in a chess match for the world championship with the Soviet champion, Anatoly Karpov: "We are one hundred percent for you." No doubt, for these three writers, Karpov represented the Soviet political establishment, which Sartre for a long time had supported, but to which he was finally opposed. In any case, let's assume the challenger was not, like Korchnoi, simply a defector from the Soviet state (which was also punishing his wife and children by preventing them from joining him abroad) but an openly declared right-winger in politics (whatever political position that might mean). Could one expect a comparable telegram from leading literary figures on the Right? As a matter of fact, it's hard to think of any. In any case, right-wingers representing traditional ways of doing things operate with society rather than in opposition to it. When they enter into radical conflict with society, they tend to become out-and-out reactionaries. *Gaucheurs* who have chosen to be on the Right are, most generally, fascists.

In any case, M. Mascolo's ideas do not explain at all the importance of leftist ideas for any intelligentsia to maintain itself. I suppose the reason for this is historical. Change has come basically from left-wing actions, and historical change requires the effort of organized groups. Society is not changed by the behavior of even great individuals in isolation: Alexander Solzhenitsyn cannot himself change the character of Soviet life. He himself recognizes this in the financial and political support he is now giving to the groups of Soviet dissidents.

The name Solzhenitsyn suggests all that has happened in the last two

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decades—consider, for instance, the relationship that the great Russian writer and dissident has to intellectuals of the West as compared with that which existed between them and Pasternak. First, let us look at the way each man's work has been judged. Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* was, I think, greatly overrated. On the other hand, Solzhenitsyn's remarkable study of Lenin, a single volume excerpted from his vast novel on the First World War, has been treated miserably in the press. I think it is the greatest fictional work about a historical figure that I have read. When I made this point to one of the intellectuals who had been present at the Pasternak meeting in which Paul Goodman had announced that he had not read and would not read *Doctor Zhivago*, I met with this comment: "It didn't even occur to me to read *Lenin in Zurich*, seeing that the reviews were so bad."

Why the bad reviews of *Lenin in Zurich*? The reason is very simply this: Alexander Solzhenitsyn asked for a different kind of support from that which Pasternak received. One could support Pasternak as a writer who was not really opposed to the policies of his country, but opposed only to a certain harshness in the application of those policies—and as one who stood not for a different society or a different politics, but for the right to express himself in literature. Alexander Solzhenitsyn stands for a direct frontal assault on Soviet policies and on all those in the West who want to get along with the Soviet Union and do not want to engage in ideological warfare with it. Alexander Solzhenitsyn stands for, and in fact calls for, a return to the cold-war attitudes that prevailed in the United States until our adventure in Vietnam ended in disaster. He has called on the intelligentsia of the West to take a stand that it cannot identify as "Left"; as a result, Solzhenitsyn is isolated.

Three young French philosophers, *les nouveaux philosophes*, have tried to organize a new intellectual grouping in France, taking inspiration from Solzhenitsyn's writings. Are they trying to form a right-wing intelligentsia? They have been charged with that, and one can see the reasons why. On the other hand, if one looks a little more closely at the intellectual situation in France and their response to it, one realizes that matters are not so simple: these *nouveaux philosophes* charge that the French Left has become identical with the French establishment. They, the newcomers, are the heterodoxy, the "southpaws"; the leftists in France, entrenched in the universities and publishing houses, today represent orthodox opinion. In any case, Bernard-Henri Lévi and his fellows will not succeed. The problem of making a criticism of the Soviet Union that would not prove sterile, a problem that puzzled Leon Trotsky, and also many other radicals over the last forty years, is not going to be resolved by shouting a few anti-Soviet slogans and calling this a new philosophy.

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Behind these follies there is, of course, a real problem and a problem felt with especial keenness by intellectuals: the problem of the Soviet Union. This state is, as Pasternak rightly said of it, "unprecedented." It came into existence as a result of historical forces but also unquestionably as a result of a specifically intellectual interpretation of those forces, that is, the interpretation made of them by Lenin and his followers. In this sense it was correct of Trotsky to say in his *History of the Russian Revolution* that without Lenin the revolution would never have taken place. So intellectuals everywhere have always felt a responsibility for the Soviet Union, and they have not spared themselves in the effort to defend, justify, and protect it, often from slander, sometimes from perfectly just accusations. In a way, the Soviet Union is their product, the product of their intelligence, born of their speculative historical thinking as Athena was born from the brain of Zeus. And that is why Andre Salmon's image of the Russian revolutionary as a man reading a book while at the controls of a locomotive is a poetically exact one. But responsibility for an existing and powerful state is not easily borne. Responsibility for the Soviet Union, as it turns out, also means and has meant responsibility for the CHEKA, for the KGB, and for their empire of slaves, for the Gulag Archipelago, revealed to the world in all its horror by Solzhenitsyn. Since that revelation, admiration and affection for the Soviet state felt by so many intellectuals has turned into a kind of hate. Even Jean-Paul Sartre, who more than anyone represented the idea that it was impermissible to criticize the Soviet Union (for to do so would mean to take the side of capitalism and imperialism against it), finally expressed his hatred of the Russian Communist party. Solzhenitsyn, for his part, evidently wants to exonerate the Russians for the creation of the Soviet state and its empire of slaves, and to fix the whole guilt for this securely on those intellectuals, of whatever nationality, who played leading parts in the October Revolution. Thus he would have it that there was not a single Great Russian on the Central Committee of Lenin's Communist party. What about Vladimir Ilyich himself? Here Solzhenitsyn availed himself of recently turned-up evidence that Lenin's grandmother may have been of Jewish origin. I think his emphasis on this point unworthy of the great Russian novelist, and it was quite rightly condemned by Boris Souvarine. But undeniably the Soviet state was born of an interpretation of historical forces in which intellectuals, many of them Jews, did play a leading part.

On the matter of "southpaws"—that is to say, of leftist support for "southpaws"—surely the term has included certain national states that were regarded as privileged: the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, especially during the so-called "cultural revolution," Israel, and, most recently, Khomeini's Islamic Iran. Probably the illusion that

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national states can be southpaws began with the Bolshevik propaganda for the Soviet state. It took Sartre some forty years of reflection to decide that the Soviet Union, and China, too, were "right-handed." I am not sure, though, that he was convinced that they had to be that. Now in my judgment, all nations, including Israel, are right-handed and have to be that, so I think that the support of intellectuals for any particular state on the ground that it is *not* right-handed is one of the worst and most tenacious of modern political mistakes. And it is a mistake, too, to demand of any state that it be, or try to become, a southpaw state. The support of intellectuals for any kind of state, let it be the best and most humanly serviceable of welfare states, while certainly in no sense intellectually objectionable, cannot be said to flow from intellectual principles held at any depth. For even the best of welfare states cannot but develop problems of unjust preferment to which intellectuals may on occasion take exception. We may find a model of intellectual integrity, I think, in the attitude taken toward Israel by Gershom Scholem, who has told us in the clearest terms that while he insisted upon calling himself a Zionist, he did not admit to being a Jewish nationalist. On the other hand, Scholem did not assail the state of Israel for carrying out nationalist rather than strictly Zionist policies.

But to come back to that evening in 1955 when our inability to judge the Soviet behavior toward Pasternak led to the breakup of our meeting. If any one person was responsible for breaking up the meeting, that person unquestionably was Paul Goodman. And his reason for breaking it up was basically that he did not want to make—publicly—any unfavorable judgment of Soviet literary policy. Yet Paul, however much he may have wanted to get along with the leftist youth, was in no sense a Stalinist. I think he may have felt some regret for his own actions as we left the Buttinger town house that night, for as Meyer Schapiro and I were getting into a cab, Paul, who had come up behind us, called to me. What did he want? As I remember, he shook his fist at me, and I interpreted the gesture as hostile, and especially hostile to me. On the other hand, he called out, "Lionel, wait!" But I thought, "Why should I wait? So that he could shake his fist in my face?" I told the driver to drive off. He did, and we left Paul on the curb calling after us, "But I wanted to come with you!" All the ambiguities and contradictions of the evening were somehow present in that last upsetting scene.

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Max Delbrück

An Appreciation

SOLOMON W. GOLOMB

IT WAS MY PRIVILEGE TO KNOW MAX DELBRÜCK during the final third of his life. When I first met him in 1956, J. D. Watson's *Double Helix* had not yet appeared, DNA was not a household word, and Delbrück's name was widely known only within the several scientific disciplines to which he had contributed. Yet it was quickly apparent that this was not merely another competent Caltech scientist, but a major intellectual force, and a man who exercised a unique form of moral leadership over those with whom he came into contact. His role as final arbiter, authority, and judge of research developments and speculations during the seminal era of the formulation of molecular genetics ("What will Delbrück say?") is amply attested in *The Double Helix* and subsequently in *The Eighth Day of Creation* by H. F. Judson. When portions of *The Eighth Day* were being serialized in *The New Yorker* prior to its publication in book form, Max was amused to read that at a much earlier date he was already a legend in his own time. "If I was a legend then," he observed, "by now I must be merely a myth."

Inevitably, Max Ludwig Henning Delbrück will someday be the subject of a major biography. I will merely sketch some aspects and events of his life as I heard him describe them. His father, Hans Delbrück, was Germany's leading military historian, and more than half a century older than Max, the youngest of seven children. Until he came to the United States in his early thirties, Max was known principally as Hans Delbrück's son. To establish an independent identity for himself, and because he thought he had some talent in that direction, Max found himself attracted at an early age to science, and specifically to astronomy. His graduate studies in astronomy were unrewarded in that he never successfully completed a thesis. Eventually he switched to physics. In his own view, the undistinguished dissertation that finally qualified him for the Ph.D. in physics was unmemorable in the extreme. I envision the young Max Delbrück of this period as having a voracious intellectual appetite for facts and information in almost all fields (cer-

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tainly including philosophy, history, literature, and the arts) and developing very rigorous canons of scientific proof and validity, but not yet having learned to see the broad picture and to identify the characteristic features and unexpected patterns as required for the highest levels of scientific achievement.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, Hans Delbrück's son spent his time at the world's most active centers of physics research: the University of Göttingen during the golden age; the Bristol of Dirac, Powell, and Blackett; the Zurich of Wolfgang Pauli; the Copenhagen of Niels Bohr; and the laboratory of Otto Hahn and Lise Meitner at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute in Berlin. At Göttingen, Max also learned about Hilbert's "formalist" school of mathematical thought and the spectacular 1930 results of young Kurt Gödel (born the same year as Max) in the logical foundations of mathematics. At Bohr's Institute, Max met and befriended the polymath George Gamow, whose scientific interests and contributions encompassed physics, cosmology, and years later, molecular genetics. Max also became a convert to Bohr's "Copenhagen school" of the philosophy of science and was profoundly influenced by a lecture by Bohr in 1932 or 1933 on biology and physics, in which the question was raised (not for the first time) whether or not the laws of physics are sufficient to account for the phenomena of biology. Several years later, as the theoretician in Lise Meitner's lab, Max was asked to explain the presence of traces of unexpected elements after uranium (U^{238}) was bombarded with neutrons. Max proposed that these were new "transuranium" elements that had been formed, and he developed an elaborate physical theory of these elements. His colleagues found this highly plausible and, being physicists, delayed for some time the chemical testing that showed that the "new" elements were, in fact, barium and krypton. So Max missed the boat on that one, and it was Lise Meitner who finally came up with the fission explanation. (Years later, Max observed wryly that his theorizing probably set back nuclear physics in Germany by about three years. The unintended benefit to the world from this may have been enormous!) Thus at age thirty, Max Delbrück had all the earmarks of the mediocre son of a famous father.

In fact by this time, Max was already preoccupied and obsessed with a revolutionary idea, motivated in no small measure by Bohr's question about the physical basis of life. The central process of biology is genetics. Rather than studying the genetics of peas or fruit flies or hybrid corn, all of which are comparable in complexity to humans or elephants or oak trees, the emphasis should be on finding the simplest organisms that exhibit this property (that is, self-replication) and studying the genetics of these organisms in detail.

In 1937 Max Delbrück came to Caltech on a Rockefeller grant as a

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biologist. The simplest organisms with any genetic properties at all, he reasoned, are viruses. In the 1920s, he learned, there had been a flurry of interest in trying to control various bacterial diseases by means of the viruses (called bacteriophages, or phages for short) parasitic on those bacteria. Delbrück subsequently selected the phages of the ubiquitous colon bacillus, *Escherichia coli* (found abundantly in all the world's sewage) as the appropriate experimental animals, and in particular the "T series" of phage, T1 to T7 as they were later designated. (At Caltech in the late 1930s, Delbrück was able to collaborate with Emory Ellis, a bacteriophage biologist. This collaboration was fruitful in developing many of the basic experimental techniques for the study of phage.) In the early 1940s Max persuaded the small coterie of viral geneticists to concentrate their efforts on these phages of E. coli, in what became known as the "phage treaty."

The insight that the way to study genetics is through viruses rather than elephants (or *Drosophila,* or *Neurospora*) was an idea whose time had come. Besides Delbrück, both Salvador Luria and Alfred Hershey had independently come up with the same notion. Indeed, all three were recognized in the award of the 1969 Nobel Prize for physiology and medicine. By about 1940, Delbrück and Luria had found each other and for a while worked together in this endeavor when Luria would visit Delbrück at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, and, during summers, at Cold Spring Harbor on Long Island. Hershey first met Delbrück when he visited Nashville at Max's invitation in January 1943. Delbrück, Luria, and Hershey formed the nucleus of what became known as "the phage group." But adequate funding for such research was an idea whose time had not yet come. Several of the people attracted to this area became discouraged and turned their attention elsewhere. Delbrück, however, resolutely persisted.

In 1941, stranded in the United States by World War II after his two-year fellowship at Caltech in Pasadena, Delbrück obtained a position as a physics instructor at Vanderbilt University (where he stayed until 1947), and where, on his own time, he continued to develop the concepts and experimental techniques that would be needed for phage genetics. Vanderbilt was not a high-pressure research university. As long as he met his physics classes, Max was free to pursue whatever other interests he wished. He even received a few hundred dollars a year to support his research work. In retrospect, Max observed that this was the ideal environment in which to develop a new branch of research that was not yet recognized as part of the mainstream. In 1947 Max was able to return to Caltech with a regular faculty appointment in biology. In August 1941 he married "Manny" (née Mary Bruce), and their home in Pasadena became a charmingly Americanized version of the European-style intel-

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lectual salon, and remained so for more than thirty years.

Several members of the Delbrück family in Germany were persecuted and even imprisoned for failing to support the Nazi regime and its policies. Several perished as a result of the abortive 1944 plot on Hitler's life. Some of the survivors (including Max's brother) were released from German prisons only to die in Russian ones. Max and Manny maintained a lifelong commitment to helping others, especially scientists, obtain civil rights, emigration permits, and political asylum. Once, when asked by a Caltech undergraduate (possibly looking for support for resisting the draft) if he hadn't refused to work on the Manhattan Project as a matter of conscience, I heard Max answer that he was spared the necessity of facing that particular moral dilemma. "You forget that I was an enemy alien. I was German and not Jewish. There was no way they would have let me work on the atomic bomb." Max was often at his Socratic best when refusing to take credit for morally commendable behavior. Even his doing science, he would contend, stemmed from no lofty motives, but was an uncontrollable compulsion. He was merely fortunate that this vice of his was more socially acceptable than alcoholism or drug addiction.

After the war, the pace of molecular genetics quickened. Avery had demonstrated in 1943 that it was the nucleic acid (the DNA in a bacterium) that contained the genetic information, rather than amino acids (proteins, polypeptides) as had been previously supposed. Others originally trained in physics, including George Gamow and Francis Crick, began to take an interest in molecular genetics. Delbrück's doctoral and postdoctoral students began to spread the gospel according to Delbrück far and wide. One of Max's protégés, James Watson, went to Cambridge and collaborated with Crick to discover the double helix structure of DNA. Delbrück's students, associates, and disciples began to receive Nobel Prizes with monotonous regularity. It was almost an anticlimax when the Nobel committee finally acknowledged Max with the prize in 1969.

In fact, by the early 1950s, Max's interests had already begun to shift in another direction. The next frontier after the physical basis of *life*, Max reasoned, is the physical basis of *mind*, including perception, intelligence, and awareness. Applying the proven principle of looking for the simplest instance of the phenomenon in question as a basis for study and understanding, Max decided to focus on perception at the cellular level. As his "experimental animal" he selected *Phycomyces*, a one-celled fungus with a phototropic organelle, a "sense of sight" on a subcellular scale. Many summers thereafter, there was a research program on *Phycomyces* at Cold Spring Harbor, a biology research facility currently directed by Watson. But interesting as *Phycomyces* may be, it

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has not been the touchstone to mind and intelligence that phage was to genetics. That would have been too much to expect.

After Max reached the normal retirement age of sixty-eight in 1974, the trustees of the California Institute of Technology named him a Board of Trustees Professor, exempting him from ever having to retire, a distinction rarely conferred even on Nobel Prize winners, in which Caltech abounds. In the spring of 1978, while preparing to undergo heart bypass surgery for angina pectoris, Max was examined and found to have an advanced case of multiple myeloma. He spent the rest of his life on a succession of chemotherapy regimens, and remained remarkably active, both physically and intellectually, until nearly the very end. He delivered the commencement address, a profound and moving essay, "The Arrow of Time," at Caltech in June 1978. Less than six weeks before his death on March 9, 1981, he appeared publicly at the midyear commencement of the University of Southern California, where he received an honorary degree. At the memorial service held in his honor at Caltech on Easter Sunday, April 19, 1981, Max provided much of the entertainment, in the form of audio-taped messages to those assembled, photos from throughout his career projected onto a screen, and recordings of songs that he sang at several student-produced Caltech skits in years gone by.

My own involvement with Max Delbrück began in 1956 as a result of the "genetic coding problem." It was Delbrück's old friend George Gamow who had started the excitement in the early 1950s with one of the most successful speculative leaps of the scientific imagination since Jonathan Swift—in the third voyage of *Gulliver's Travels*—announced that Mars had two small moons, some one hundred fifty years before they were actually discovered by astronomers.

Gamow observed that nucleic acid could be viewed as a sequence of four different bases, or nucleotides. It had long since been discovered by Oswald Avery that nucleic acid, rather than the protein in the chromosomes, somehow contained the genetic information; and Crick and Watson had just announced the double-helix structure of DNA. Obviously, said Gamow, the four nucleotides are the symbols of a code, the *genetic code*. And what is being coded for? Obviously the sequence of amino acids that form a protein. More specifically, he said, there are some twenty amino acids to be coded for, and since two symbols from the four-symbol alphabet allow only sixteen possible combinations, "clearly" the code words are triplets of nucleotides.

Now the problem arises that there are sixty-four different code triplets, but only twenty amino acids to be coded for. No matter, said Gamow, the code is "degenerate": There are, typically, several code words for each amino acid—as few as one code word, as many as six, per amino acid.

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The incredible thing is that all of this pure, whole-cloth speculation, as far as I have gone, turned out to be entirely right. Nature does use a degenerate triplet code, for exactly twenty amino acids. This may be the greatest achievement of Aristotelian reasoning in the history of science—certainly better than anything Aristotle himself accomplished. The Aristotelian method is to ask: "How would Nature have done it, if she were as clever as I?" Unfortunately, Nature is rarely as clever as I. All too often, one of us has thought of something that the other overlooked. An information theorist, for example, might have proposed a variable-word-length code, like Morse code, with shorter codes for the more common amino acids, and longer codes for the less common. Fortunately, Gamow did not outsmart Nature, as many of us later did, on these basic aspects of the code. That is, not until he tackled the problem of how to synchronize the decoding.

Suppose our four symbols are A, E, H, T, and that in the coded message we see H, A, T, E, A, T. What are the code words? If they are HAT and EAT, what about the "overlap" words, ATE and TEA? Gamow visualized the amino acids swimming around in the soup, looking for their call letters. If the intended reading was HAT, EAT, but the amino acid corresponding to ATE showed up first, it would spoil everything. Gamow's solution was to propose an overlapping triplet code, where the successive amino acids correspond to the triplets HAT, ATE, TEA, EAT. A very efficient packing, but this scheme seriously limits the possibilities of what successors a given code word can have. Thus, HAT can be followed only by ATA, ATE, ATH, or ATT. It was Francis Crick, in Cambridge, around 1953–54, who showed that Nature could not be using Gamow's overlapping triplets, at least in the case of insulin, one of the few proteins whose amino acid sequence was known at that time. The entropy in the insulin sequence is too high for Gamow's overlapping hypothesis (that is, there is too much freedom as to which amino acid can follow which other amino acid). By 1956 Sydney Brenner, a colleague of Crick, using data from several protein sequences, was able to show that all overlapping triplet codes are impossible, provided that the code is "universal" (that is, that all earth organisms use the same code).

Gamow was also the first of many to be seduced by a clever scheme for reducing sixty-four triplets down to twenty amino acids. His hypothesis was that the order of the three symbols in the triplet didn't matter, so that AAT, ATA, and TAA would all correspond to the same amino acid. The amino acid corresponding to AAA would have only one code word, while the one corresponding to ATE would have six (AET, ATE, EAT, ETA, TAE, TEA). Remarkably, there are exactly twenty such classes of code words. This was so compelling to Gamow that I don't believe he ever reconciled himself to this part of his speculation being incorrect.

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(As a matter of strict historical accuracy, the idea of triplet code words did not originate with Gamow. One earlier proposal was put forward in 1952 by Alexander Dounce, who had a scheme that allowed for code words for as many as forty amino acids. Dounce's exposition was heavy on biochemical details and did not attract the widespread attention it properly deserved. In retrospect, Gamow's principal contributions were to interest a great many people in the genetic coding problem and to propose a model for the code that was specific enough to be disproved.)

The next major synchronization hypothesis was "comma-free codes." In a paper called "Codes Without Commas," Crick, Griffith, and Orgel proposed, in effect, that if HAT and EAT are code words, then neither of the overlaps, ATE and TEA, can be code words at all. Again, miraculously, the largest comma-free dictionary using three-letter words written from a four-symbol alphabet has exactly *twenty* words, the magic number of amino acids.

It was at this stage of the problem that I entered the picture. In August 1956, having returned from a Fulbright year in Norway, I started work in the communications section of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory of the California Institute of Technology. My office-mate was Lloyd Welch, who was then finishing his Ph.D. in mathematics at Caltech and working part-time at JPL. Another young mathematician at Caltech was Basil Gordon, who had just gotten his doctorate there and who had been a good friend of mine since undergraduate days at Johns Hopkins.

Max Delbrück had asked Gordon about the problem of finding different maximum-sized comma-free codes. Gordon, Welch, and I collaborated on this problem. This was not part of my job at JPL, but I remember that during the fall of 1956 it absorbed many of my evenings and weekends. What we had done, in typical mathematical fashion, was not so much to solve the original problem as to generalize it. We created the theory of maximum-sized comma-free codes for word-length k over an n-symbol alphabet. Our paper, "Comma-Free Codes," appeared early in 1958 in the *Canadian Journal of Mathematics*, within a few days of the launching by JPL of *Explorer I*, the United States' first artificial satellite.

I frequently attended Delbrück's seminars at Caltech during 1957, and even before the "Comma-Free Codes" paper appeared, he got after me to get back to the "real" problem of what can happen in the very special and mathematically trivial case of writing three-letter words from a four-symbol alphabet. Gordon was drafted into the army in the summer of 1957, but Welch and I continued our collaboration and obtained a complete characterization of the maximum-sized, comma-free-triplet dictionaries for all alphabet sizes. With a four-symbol alphabet, there are basically five different dictionary structures, all having twenty code

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words. (This fact was independently discovered, at about the same time, by Hans Freudenthal in the Netherlands.) One nontrivial result that we obtained was that in any message constructed from any one of these dictionaries, the same nucleotide symbol could not occur as many as four times in a row. Our results appeared later, in 1958, in the paper "Construction and Properties of Comma-Free Codes" by Golomb, Welch, and Delbrück.

In the very first series of experiments to determine the occurrence of repetitions of symbols in nucleic acid, it was found that the same symbol *did* occur four and, in fact, even five times in a row. The comma-free-triplet hypothesis was gravely wounded by this discovery and never recovered.

There is, however, an amusing postscript to all this. In the fall of 1958, the Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology was awarded to Dr. George Beadle, who was on leave from Caltech and staying in England. The Delbrück group at Caltech composed a telegram, using a set of comma-free triplets from the DNA alphabet of A, C, G, T (standing for *a*denine, *c*ytosine, *g*uanine, and *t*hymine) to represent the letters of the English alphabet, including a code word for the space symbol. The plaintext of this message was: "Congratulations. Break this code or give back Nobel Prize. —Sterling, Max, and Marco." The signatories' names, sent in the clear, included Sterling Emerson and Max Delbrück. We shall return later to the question of who is Marco.

A few weeks later a coded telegram was received in reply. It used a different triplet code, not even comma-free, with the same A, C, G, T alphabet. Delbrück called on me to decipher it. It said: "Thanks for your telegram. I'm sure it's a fine sentiment, but I haven't yet decoded it. —George." Soon after, Delbrück received an air letter, postmarked Oxford, November 14, 1958, as follows: "Dear Max, I'm a darned poor cryptographer, but so many friends and relatives have already helped spend the money that I can't give it back. What shall I do? —Beets." Obviously he had, finally, decoded the original telegram.

Copies of that original telegram, without explanation, had been sent off by Delbrück to friends and acquaintances far and wide. Some of them sent coded replies. A typical reply, written in the same code, decoded as follows: "MESSAGE WAS TOO SIMPLE SEND HARDER ONE."

Most baffling of the coded replies was a string of thirty-six beads, in four colors, from someone in Princeton. On the assumption that it was a triplet code, the message had the form of a cryptogram, with pattern: ABCDEFDGHIJC. The Caltech group had observed that it could not be in the original code, because the set of triplets was not comma-free. Moreover, such a short pattern could be fitted to English text in a great many ways. One such fit is PHYSICS·TODAY, with no space between

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words. When they decided the situation was hopeless, I was called in. As a mere cryptogram, I realized, it had literally thousands of solutions, including everything from CHERBORG·LINE to DISTANT·LOVES to WATSON'S·DIRT (obviously a reference to *The Double Helix*).

One might easily give up on the grounds that the intended decoding could not possibly be divined. But I persisted. Suppose, I reasoned, that it is in the original code, but some English letter not in the original message was needed, and a new triplet was created. The composer may not have realized this was a *comma-free* triplet code, and the new triplet may destroy the comma-free property. The original code had a *space* code word. Suppose that is the code word in positions four and seven. That hypothesis led immediately to the decoding "WHO·IS·MARCO." The *W* at the beginning was the letter that never appeared in the original telegram.

In December 1976 I talked to Delbrück on the phone regarding all of these coded messages. His recollections were rather hazy. When I told him about the first telegram, signed by Sterling, Max, and Marco, his exact words to me were "Who is Marco?" Incidentally, I didn't know either. (I later learned that Marco is Marco Zalokar, at Caltech in 1958 and subsequently in Paris.)

Max sent me the file from his archives from this period. At the Nobel ceremony for Beadle, a special double helix made of toothpicks in four colors was presented to him. Decoded from its triplet code, the message read: "I AM THE RIDDLE OF LIFE KNOW ME AND YOU WILL KNOW YOURSELF." Obviously Beadle had little difficulty decoding this one, because on January 7, 1959, a message was received in reply. It began: "Know myself but" in plaintext, and then switched over to code. Max said the coded portion was never decoded.

In July 1960 I was in England to present a paper on the theory of enumeration at the Fourth London Symposium on Information Theory. At the end of the conference, I took the train to Cambridge, where I met Francis Crick for the first time. He spent the entire day with me, showing me the adjacent lab where the original model of the hemoglobin molecule filled half the room, and took me to lunch at the Eagle, the pub where Crick and Watson worked out the structure of DNA on the back of a napkin—or was it the tablecloth? As I visualize it, Watson told Crick that it had been shown experimentally that in samples of DNA from many organisms, the symbols A and T had the same frequency, as did the symbols C and G. Now what did this suggest about the structure of DNA? To which Crick undoubtedly replied, "Elementary, my dear Watson."

We strolled back along the banks of the Cam, and continued our discussion of possible models for the genetic code. Some two years later,

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in October 1962, I received a monograph called "The Recent Excitement in the Coding Problem," by Francis Crick. It arrived in the mail the same morning that the announcement came over the radio that Crick had won the Nobel Prize.

A few years later, when Francis Crick was visiting Pasadena, Max and Manny Delbrück invited him and the Golombs over to their house. Many stories were exchanged. Several were about a famous physicist who always introduced his wife as the sister of a well-known colleague, rather than as his own wife. Well, on one occasion, when the wife in question (or sister, if you prefer) was despairing of getting the family budget back into balance, she said, "Dear, why don't you go to Stockholm and get another one of those prizes they give out. We need the money."

Invitations to the Delbrück home were always a treat. When our children were small, there was an egg rolling contest on the Delbrück lawn on Easter Sunday. There were dinner parties, and *party* parties.

One evening I was invited to a supper where the other guests were Murray Gell-Mann and Roger Sperry. The main topics of the evening seemed to be whether behavioral biology was ready to become a science and whether Caltech should grant it institutional recognition. Gell-Mann at that time had been developing the theory of quarks and their "eightfold-way" group of symmetries, and Delbrück was suggesting he abandon all that—"since anybody competent could eventually work out all the details"—and undertake something truly challenging, like figuring out the physiological basis of thought and behavior. At another point in the conversation, Delbrück mentioned that I was his link with what was happening in prime number theory. I said that progress was painfully slow in that ancient field, and that we still could not prove mathematically something as simple as the existence of infinitely many "twin primes" (pairs of prime numbers differing by 2, such as 11 and 13, or 197 and 199), although the statistical evidence was overwhelming. Gell-Mann commented that this was because mathematicians were doing things all wrong. They were ignoring the result of Gödel that not everything that is true is provable. They could solve all of these intractable problems by adopting an appropriate set of more powerful axioms, incorporating what one could reasonably expect statistically. (Actually, such axioms were formulated decades ago by Cramér and by Schinzel, among others, and they do yield "proofs" of the infinitude of twin primes, and much more. To the physicist Gell-Mann, that may be enough, but to mathematicians, that leaves unanswered the question of whether these new and seemingly stronger axioms are consequences of, independent of, or inconsistent with the older and more intuitive ones.)

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The guests at a Delbrück party were not necessarily past, present, or future Nobel Prize winners (though indeed many of them were). There were large numbers of graduate students, undergraduate students, research associates, lab technicians, faculty members from innumerable institutions, visitors from Europe, publishers, neighbors, and relatives. I remember one party to which my wife and I were invited where it was important that the Delbrücks know in advance precisely who would be coming. It turned out that they had meticulously planned a treasure hunt, and each of the competing teams required the same composition: one team captain, one genius, one ingenious, one woman's intuitionist, and one linguist. Husbands and wives were invariably assigned to different teams. I was the "genius" on my team; my counterpart on one of the other teams was Richard Feynman. The cryptic clues had the various teams chasing on foot and by car all over Pasadena. Different teams were being run through the same sequence of clues, written on scraps of paper hidden in tree trunks or on window ledges, et cetera. A team finding a clue was to replace it carefully for the other teams. The winning team was the first to reach the final destination, which turned out to be a pizza parlor where we were all rewarded with food. I still have some shark vertebrae that I received as a prize for being on the winning team.

Max had a marvelous sense of humor and was fond of jokes of all kinds, including practical jokes (but always provided that no one would be really hurt, either physically or emotionally). I remember that his original reaction to Tom Lehrer's songs was one of disapproval—they were too cynical, he said. Twenty years later his objections seemed to have evaporated. In the context of the 1970s, Lehrer's humor had lost its sting, and was just good-natured fun.

In the fall of 1961, while Max was serving as guest director of the newly formed Institute for Genetics in Cologne, West Germany, he invited me to come and give a lecture on mathematical aspects of the genetic coding problem. He also arranged for me to give a similar lecture at the Genetics Institute in Copenhagen. Not very long thereafter, the experimentalists finally caught up with and passed the theoreticians, and the correspondence between codons (three-symbol code words in the nucleic acid alphabet) and amino acids became explicit and verifiable. My own role, such as it was, had come to an end.

I remember asking Max in the late 1950s if all this new genetic knowledge wasn't going to have a tremendous impact on the treatment and cure of disease, on the elimination of birth defects, and on the development of whole new strains of organisms, if not actual new life forms. I had suddenly been struck by these fantastic possibilities. "Yes," Delbrück said matter-of-factly, "this will all happen in due course. Some

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of these things will occur fairly soon. Others, like the new life forms, may be a century or more away." "But aren't you interested in working on these problems?" I asked. "No," he explained, "what you've just described is biological engineering. Just as nuclear physics gave rise to nuclear engineering, genetic biology will give birth to genetic engineering. Some people are scientists and some are engineers. I am a scientist. When the time comes, there will be no shortage of bioengineers." At that time, I found all of this mind boggling. Now, of course, it has become commonplace.

By 1963 Max had returned to Caltech from Cologne, and I had left the Caltech-affiliated Jet Propulsion Laboratory for the University of Southern California. We still saw each other, though not as frequently. I remember Max acting astonished when I told him I was planning to write seven different books. His reaction seemed to say that serious scientists publish research papers, not books. Three of these books actually appeared in the mid-1960s. The failure of some of the others to materialize may have been related to a subconscious belief that "Max would not approve."

My spending academic year 1971–72 at Caltech as visiting professor of applied science had little effect one way or the other on the frequency of contact between the Golombs and the Delbrücks. Max at that time had developed interests involving the lives of great scientists. We attended two lectures he gave on Copernicus. Years later, at the time of the Einstein centennial, Max gave a fascinating lecture on Einstein to a packed auditorium at Caltech. He pointed out that on several occasions, both in Berlin and in America, his path and Einstein's had crossed. (Actually, their "world lines" had intersected, as he relativistically phrased it.)

In the later years, Max would occasionally call and suggest an evening of chess, sometimes at my home, sometimes at his. Early on I introduced him to the chess clock, which is really two clocks, each running only during a player's turn to move. Since I was the stronger player, I proposed giving him a time handicap. He would have thirty minutes for all his moves during the game, and I would have only five minutes for all of mine. He thought this would be an overwhelming advantage, but I won as easily as before. I suggested giving him an hour to my two minutes. (He was unwilling to accept the handicap of material, such as pawns or pieces, since in his view the game would no longer be chess, and even if he won, he couldn't claim it as a victory.) With that advantage, he said, he would surely win. But as we reached the end game, and he was far behind in material, the clock showed that he had only five minutes left to my one minute. "Now I know how you're doing it," he said in mock indignation. "You're thinking on my time."

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Chess is an emotionally demanding game, and when his angina condition became severe, Max frequently could not stand the strain of more than one game at a session. He decided to teach me to play backgammon, at which he had considerable skill, and since I was a rank beginner, this imposed no emotional strain on him at all.

From his Göttingen days he remembered that David Hilbert, the high priest of mathematics at that sacred shrine, had pronounced the Riemann Hypothesis as the most important unsolved problem in mathematics. Unlike other famous unsolved problems (for instance, the twin-prime problem, or Fermat's Last Theorem), which any amateur can understand, and hundreds annually claim to have solved, the Riemann Hypothesis cannot even be stated without using the terminology of the theory of functions of a complex variable. In the middle of the last century, Bernhard Riemann conjectured that "all complex zeroes of the Zeta-function have real part one-half." In the mid-1970s, I was able to report to Max that Norman Levinson of MIT had proved, in a remarkable tour de force of mathematical analysis, that at least 70 percent of the zeroes of the Zeta-function have the required property. Meanwhile, Pierre Deligne, a Belgian mathematician living in France, had proved André Weil's generalization of the Riemann Hypothesis to function fields and would certainly receive a Field Medal (the nearest thing in mathematics to a Nobel Prize) for this discovery, but unfortunately Deligne's result did not contain the *original* Riemann Hypothesis as a special case.

As Max listened to all this, he seemed struck by a revolutionary thought. "You know," he said, "that's an entirely different form of reality. It has nothing to do with *physical* reality. If all the laws of physics were different, if gravity obeyed an inverse cube law, if quarks came in groups of five instead of three, that would have no effect on whether or not the Riemann Hypothesis is true. The zeroes of the Zeta-function would still be wherever they are."

I am sure the underlying observation here is very old, but it reveals something important about Max as a multidisciplinary scientist. Most mathematicians are realists (in the sense of Plato) not only about mathematics but about the physical universe as well. Not only were there infinitely many prime numbers before Euclid proved it, but the orbit of Mars was an ellipse before Kepler discovered it, and the neutrino existed before Fermi proposed it. Modern physicists tend to the opposite view. The meteor that strikes the surface of Mars makes no sound if there is none to hear it. Fundamental particles have existence only after they have been postulated. All the laws of our universe could be entirely different if random events had occurred just a little differently during the critical first nanosecond after the Big Bang. Max did not

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find it necessary to choose between these two metaphysical views. It is not that one approach to epistemology is right and the other is wrong; rather, the mathematician and the physicist are investigating two distinct and independent realities. Each is correct about his own reality. It is only because mathematical reality so often provides such a good fit as a model of physical reality that confusion between the two arises.

I suggested that there may even be a hierarchy of realities. If we think of biology in terms of earth life, all of which involves the same genetic mechanism, with nucleic acid corresponding to protein, and even the same basic genetic code for all earth organisms, this may be a biological reality limited to one planet. There are even narrower cultural realities, which differ from one country or one language to the next. Max took a more absolutist view. The fundamental distinction, he said, is between mathematical reality and physical reality. The other distinctions don't involve reality.

Between the extremes of mathematical reality and cultural reality, I offered the following example. The fifth element in our alphabet sequence (that is, the letter *e*) is a *vowel*. This is a mere cultural reality. It is not true, for example, in the Russian alphabet. On the other hand, the fifth element in our numerical sequence (that is, the number 5) is a prime. Even a new set of laws for the physical universe would not change that reality.

From time to time Max would decide to teach an undergraduate course at Caltech—in elementary physics, in the philosophy of science, in mathematical logic. In the early spring of 1980, he called to ask if I would be interested in doing a joint book review with him of Douglas R. Hofstadter's *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid.* I was familiar with the book, but had not yet read it. "It may not be worth reviewing," Max cautioned. "Only if it has something very valuable in it, or possibly if it is so false and misleading that others must be warned; but if it is merely frivolous, that doesn't warrant a review."

He had a small class of Caltech seniors that was to meet at his house every other Wednesday during the spring quarter. The Hofstadter book was to be the text, and several chapters of reading would be required between meetings.

It was an interesting course. The discussion was almost as good as Manny Delbrück's pastries. There were some social and musical events, too, and a final banquet. But what to make of Hofstadter's book? I thought it was amusing, witty, at times a bit too precious, and certainly rather long. Max applied his usual critical standards. What was merely entertaining, though it did no harm, was essentially frivolous. The treatment of Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem was evidently rigorous but, despite all the attempts to entertain, no easier to follow than it ever

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had been. The description of molecular biology and genetics tended to confuse and obscure what was already widely known and understood. But worst of all, in Max's view, was the treatment of how the brain works. "A disgrace," Max pronounced.

We each wrote a review, and the two reviews tended not to overlap. My approach was lighthearted, in what I thought was the spirit of the book itself, but pointed out errors of omission and commission, which were mostly minor, often amusing. Max took the book very seriously, and had serious criticisms.

Max made the first attempt to cut and paste our two critical documents together into a single review. As our class of students observed, they seemed to fit together far better than anyone should have expected. We went through a few rounds of revising, mostly to hide the seams even better, and in due course the review appeared in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR (Autumn 1980).

After Max was diagnosed as suffering from multiple myeloma, he was put on chemotherapy. By the spring of 1980, none of the more traditional chemotherapeutic agents seemed to be working well, and it was suggested that Max would be an ideal candidate for interferon treatment. (The interferon mania in the press and on Wall Street was then at its peak.) After his first treatment with interferon, Max reported to me the symptoms that it had induced. These included headache and high fever lasting several hours.

I described to Max a speculation that I found very attractive. "You know," I said, "for centuries the human race has lived with the idea that the common cold is a disease that ought to be conquered, cured, eradicated. But maybe that's all wrong. If the cold were all bad, I suspect we would have evolved to not come down with it. So the fact that we still get colds suggests that the cold may have survival value and that it may be therapeutic. And here you've even suggested a mechanism. The cold is brought on by a virus. Every virus infection triggers the body's production of interferon. That prevents us from getting any *other* virus infection, one that might really be serious. And apparently it has anticancer properties. By getting colds every so often, the body may stimulate itself to make enough interferon to get rid of cancers when they are still small groups of cells, before they get too big to eliminate. Even the cold symptoms—the fever and the headache—may be brought on, not by the virus directly, but by the interferon whose production it triggers. And these, too, have therapeutic value. Hyperthermia—raising the body temperature—has proven cancer-fighting effectiveness. And headache helps persuade us to take it easy, to lie down and rest, while the body replenishes itself. Even the coughing and sneezing that occur in the later stages of a cold—why, that may be the mechanism for

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expelling potentially harmful particles from the lungs before they get too well established and cause problems. What do you think of this hypothesis?" I asked, believing I had just presented an excellent, nearly irrefutable case.

"Oh, that's nonsense," said Max. "Utter nonsense."

I was startled. "How can you say that?" I asked. "What part do you disagree with?"

"The whole thing. Oh, I admit, it's one possible hypothesis. But there are hundreds of others, at least equally likely. What evidence do you have for picking that particular one?"

Of course. This was not a casual conversation between longtime friends. I had just formulated a tentative scientific hypothesis and presented it to Max Delbrück. And he had responded, as he had been responding for many decades under such circumstances: What are the alternative hypotheses? Why do you prefer that particular one? Where is your evidence? How can you go public with such half-baked ideas? Why don't you go back and do your homework, take it apart and examine it critically, then put it back together, and if you still think you have something, come back and we'll find more holes in it. But don't expect me to endorse some nonsensical idea as scientific truth just because we're old friends, and I'm not supposed to hurt your feelings.

That was the quintessential Delbrück role—to maintain the highest standards of scientific judgment and criticism, and to force others to do likewise.

(Incidentally, I still think the idea of the common cold as a therapeutic agent is "cute," and I still have no terrific suggestions about how to test it. One could try to analyze some vast medical data base to correlate frequency of colds against subsequent onset of various types of cancer. Even so, any conclusions arrived at by this method would be tentative at best.)

By September of 1980 it was obvious that interferon had done Max no good, but, true to its name, had interfered with his receiving effective chemotherapy. Max now spent most of his time lying down, and required frequent blood transfusions. He had two symmetrically situated wounds on the backs of his hands, a result, he said, of the low platelet count characteristic of his disease. Such were undoubtedly the stigmata of Saint Francis of Assisi, Max announced, and added that Saint Francis died when only about forty-four years old, looking very aged, some two years after his stigmata had first appeared. Max manifested an almost scientific detachment as he studied the progress of the disease that would inevitably take his life.

When he had been nominated in early 1980 for an honorary degree at USC, ritual required that the nominator solicit letters of support from

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Max's peers. Among those contacted were several of the Nobel Prize winners with whom Max had worked at various stages of his long career. There was one theme common to almost all the letters, a statement that also appears in *The Eighth Day of Creation*: "Max Delbrück is the most intelligent man in biology today."

Looking forward to receiving the honorary degree on January 27, 1981, may have extended Max's life by several weeks. When the occasion arose, he was very much up for it. He even attended the dinner the night before the ceremony and the luncheon that followed it. The following weekend there was a conference at Caltech, sponsored by the Leakey Foundation largely at Delbrück's instigation, on sociobiology, and Max, although quite ill, attended several of the talks. Characteristically, he was not overly impressed with any startling new truths. In fact, he had negative reactions to most of what he heard. Caltech did well to be out of that business, he so much as stated.

Two weeks later, on February 15, I saw Max for the last time. He had a visitor from Europe who wanted a Rubik's Cube. Yes, I could supply one. He also had a copy of the March 1981 *Scientific American* with a cover story by Douglas Hofstadter on Rubik's Cube, and which generously referenced my observation of an analogy between twists on the corners of the Cube and quarks in physics. Yes, I wanted to read it. My copy probably wouldn't arrive for another week.

Max was in good spirits, and his health seemed as good as at any time in the previous three months. He told me he had been having a new type of pain in his back, which he believed represented some healing of previous damage that was taking place, but which his doctor believed was quite ominous. "Well then," I replied, "I certainly believe your interpretation." "Yes," said Max, "but you see, the doctor and I have disagreed many times. And on all the previous occasions, his interpretation was the correct one." The cancer had reached his spinal column, and some three weeks later he was dead.

The family circumstances, the educational system, the entire cultural milieu that molded Max Delbrück belong to a long-vanished world. We will not see another like him, but we are fortunate indeed that he lived and worked among us for nearly three-quarters of a century.

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Slaughtering a Bull

(Five years ago this June, in Dalton, Pennsylvania, for my neighbor Jim)

DONALD LAWDER

When you hit the right spot
midway between and slightly
above the eyes (and you can do it

with a hammer, too)
nothing
can have prepared you

for the surprise of it.
There's no momentum
to his magnificence, and whatever

wonder has been hidden there
holding that great mass of cells
erect and dangerous is now

instantly not there;
the mammoth shoulders, the fierce
white head and horns

don't even wait for the legs
to crumple: the earth attracts them
and all at once they drop. Quick—

gut the leavings before they stink.
And this night, Lawder,
may you sleep like a stone.

✪ DONALD LAWDER's poems have appeared in *The New Yorker*, the *Nation*, and other journals.

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The Lumpen Middle Class

KEVIN G. BARNHURST

MY GRANDFATHER HAS TO BE NEARING EIGHTY NOW. It's been twenty years since I saw him last; he wore a full head of stark white hair, hacked off without the aid of a barber. Word in the family has it that he still lives outdoors most of the year, sleeping in the trailer that someone insisted he substitute for his tent-sized shack and taking his meals at Aunt Maggie's boardinghouse.

In Hatch, Utah, everyone seems to be related, rich and poor. My grandfather holds onto his poverty in spite of Aunt Laura, who prevails on him to "winter" with her each year in St. George, Utah, "the other Palm Springs."

Prophets are a regional phenomenon in Utah, and Grandpa is something of a prophet of poverty in our otherwise middle-class family. Even twenty years ago he looked the part—his white beard framing a wizened face and startling eyes. The story goes that my sister once objected to his ever-present cigar. "Grandpa," she reproached him, "you shouldn't do that." (She had attended only a year of senior Sunday school.) Grandpa snatched the stub, flung it to the ground, and stepped on it. He has no money, family legend has it, and therefore no vices.

Like other voices crying in the Utah wilderness, Grandpa puts no value on things. He used to own land in southern Utah, according to my father. The two of them used to walk over it—that's what it was for—and notice the oil oozing out and floating in a film along the edges of the creek. "But what did he do?" asks my dad. "He *gave* it away, signed the deed over to his brother—he didn't let it get passed down, no he *gave* it away; that's what he done." Why? I ask. "Because his brother asked for it."

My father's regret over his lost inheritance is heartfelt but misleading. He wouldn't have done anything with the land had he gotten it, or at least he wouldn't have wanted the bother any more than Grandpa did. It

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is this inability or tacit refusal to *do* anything that sets him and others like him apart. It is this manifest indifference to power—control over his own or anyone else's life—that my grandfather embodies.

My childhood memory is filled with stories of consequences my family suffered because somebody "had to go and *do*" something. The stories may vary in particulars but never in theme: "How I Was Done Out of My Inheritance" is just as often "How I Missed Out on an Education" or "How I Ended Up Without a Job." They don't indicate that my father is foolish or particularly inept but rather that any action whatever is futile. These tales form the lore and wisdom, the unacknowledged philosophy of inaction, of a peculiar and ignored class of American society, the lumpen middle class.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor.
—Psalm 41

American culture has no noble tradition associated with poverty, no conceptual equivalent to the peasantry of Europe or Russia. A peasant's continual poverty is inconsistent with American democracy and free enterprise. In our history, the "po' white trash" of the antebellum South and the small farmer fleeing the dust bowl were aberrations; even the poverty of immigrants is only temporary.

Although it's not un-American to *be* poor, it is un-American to *stay* poor, unless you're the object of WASP prejudice. According to the American mythos of the last twenty years, poverty doesn't exist among assimilated Americans (except perhaps in certain "pockets" where it is about to be eradicated). Affirmative action for "minorities" would have been impossible if our cultural landscape had been supplied with a general or Platonic ideal of the suburban or small-town poor white family. As it is, persistent poverty is deemed an exclusively ethnic or Appalachian problem that can be solved by economic integration. No one need be poor for long in the land of equal opportunity.

But there does exist a sort of American peasant class. Overwhelmingly white and small-town suburban, they wear characteristic dress and live in identifiable habitations. They have no philosophers, no spokesmen, but their will is felt in the centers of American power as a distant rumble, inarticulate but fearsome. In them are distilled the very best and worst of the culture, the quintessential Americanism, which accepts and deals pragmatically with what is, while fervently making it out to be something else entirely. They are ignorant yet believe they are wise; they are poor yet believe they are middle class. This elaborate self-deceit makes them invulnerable and their condition perpetual.

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Poor people have poor ways.
—American adage

Nobody makes as many nice distinctions about the strata of society as does the lumpen middle class. I grew up knowing my station in life much like a Flannery O'Connor character: You've got your genteel poor, rich people with rich people's ways who are down on their luck. You've got your lazy poor, vagrants and bums who never learned the evils of the dole. And you've got your no-good poor—panhandlers, pushers, hoods, and hookers—who turned to a life of crime. There are black poor, Mexican poor, Indian poor, old-country white poor, and what not. And then there's *us*—better than the lot of them because we're middle class.

I remember with nostalgia the artifacts of my parents' poverty—the yellow drop-leaf table with chrome-and-vinyl chairs to match, the knotty-pine paneling, the Early American bunk beds and lamps, and the "ultramodern" living room (authentic-looking, wood-grain occasional tables and tan Naugahide sofas with spindle legs). Their furniture was all middle class, as was their clothing—in familiar fabrics: polyester, acrylic, Dacron, nylon, Spandex.

But for all their middle-class trappings, my parents have always been poor, visibly so. Absent is the middle-class clutter of knickknacks and vacation souvenirs. Synthetics cleaned too often look dirty, double knits worn too long become misshapen, and clothing is always two years out of fashion. The Formica pattern has been scoured out of the countertops; the vinyl chairs are patched and mended. Mass culture is made of fabrics and materials that look ratty after long use and repeated cleanings.

Books, mainly relegated to the basement in my parents' home, are of two types: gospel volumes and encyclopedia sets purchased either from door-to-door salesmen or one at a time at the Safeway. My father reads a daily newspaper, but the religious magazines go unread (*National Geographic* is valued for its pictures). The principal pastime comes from a hand-me-down TV—black-and-white with poor reception on channel two. A coat hanger serves as antenna. The rhythms of daily living are determined by television: children rise and come home from school to cartoons, reruns, and toast (made from many loaves of airy white bread, purchased three for a dollar). After dinner, a spare meal of soup or hamburger casserole, comes the family prime-time ritual. My parents retire with the ten o'clock news.

All thirteen of my parents' children learned to live poor, and those who believed as we were taught—that we were respectable middle-class Americans—still live this way. Despite the myth of progress, the middle-class poor are stable and unmovable, sustained by white bread, televi-

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sion, and platitudes. Even as a child I never believed my parents were really middle class, but my mother never gave up repeating her sayings over me, hoping I wouldn't turn out bad. While she could never quite put a finger on it, she could sense my disagreement with her attitudes on working, saving, and learning.

To know how to be poor is to know everything.
—Jules Michelet

I don't remember ever seeing my mother read a book, although I know she has read some Mormon biographies. I've never seen her reading a magazine. She strictly avoids television documentaries and talk shows, and she rarely goes to movies. Yet ideas are extremely important to her. They make her life understandable and tolerable.

She may not have much, but she is free, a voting citizen with equal opportunity (she believes). If things don't improve for her, they will improve for her children. And anyway, God cares about her and about America; as bad as they are, things are going according to a divine plan. These ideas—equality, freedom, opportunity, progress, and providence—may be chimerical, but the comfort they give the lumpen middle class is substantial.

Ideas are a matter of faith with Mom, and religion, she believes, is their proper sphere. Each week she attends meetings where these ideas are reviewed in their endless permutations; and when she says she is "always learning," she means she forever finds new ways to look at what she already knows. Her religion encompasses all truth.

Like Mom, the middle-class poor know all they need to know and are confident that any other ideas are superfluous. This is why cooperation within the lumpen middle class is difficult to sustain—America's pluralism fragments its members, making them side with their wealthy coreligionists. In their diminished physical existence, abstractions loom enormous and distorted.

Even in the face of heresy, my mother maintains an exaggerated, all-American openness. She is tolerant when evangelical fund raisers send their junk mail. When non-Mormon ministers come "tracting," she is attentive, although she knows they're wasting their time. She practices a sort of reverse-Afghanistanism, politely ignoring all ideas foreign to her own. I spent my adolescence pressing her with arguments, some of them outrageous. "That's interesting," she would comment in mock earnest when I confronted her with violent land reforms by South American peasants. Assured of her wisdom, she is completely unflappable in the face of a world totally alien, even hostile, to her condition.

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This is not to say that the middle-class poor aren't as taken by *technical* innovation as their compatriots are. Some new ideas get an immediate response—macrame pot hangers, for instance. My father poured considerable time into his own invention, a swing-improving device for golfers. After he gave up, someone else marketed a similar item at enormous profit. Dad tells the story ("How I Missed Out on My Fortune") with pride, relishing his role on the technical frontier. Innovation and mass production make his poverty less severe, if only by holding out the possibility that some new invention could solve everything.

Ideas are what you make of them: lumpen middle-class parents are great believers in education, something they see in terms of the public schools, where learning is by rote and doesn't threaten. This is an accommodating position; it buys into the thoroughly American faith in education while providing the perfect defense against ideas and learning—and change. Their attitude gives the lie to the axiom that education alleviates poverty.

They can expect nothing but their labor for their pain.
—Cervantes

My father encouraged me to become a missionary for the Mormon church and offered to pay my expenses even though he had no savings. His act of faith has become a sort of family miracle. At nineteen I was sent to Bolivia, the second poorest country in South America; and although my father went on strike and my mother had a baby (her last), they sent me one hundred dollars every month without fail. My dad always marveled that they managed, since their bankbook didn't show any excess when the payments ended. Their lives have always been that way. There's never enough money, but somehow they get by.

While in Bolivia I discovered that the economics of poverty are universal. Besides a veneer of Western culture (with its own Americanized poor, the counterparts of my parents), Bolivia is endowed with a vast ethnic peasantry. Despite their cultural differences, which are not small, both the ethnic peasantry and the middle-class poor in Bolivia seem to work under the same economic principle as my parents do. The economics of poverty are remarkable, depending as they do on the one fact acknowledged only by poor people—that almost nothing is required to sustain life.

This fact is easily observed in Bolivia, where life is lived close to the edge of material necessity. When I returned to Utah, I was overwhelmed by the sumptuousness of life. In our middle-class neighborhood the

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houses seemed too large, too warm, too generously padded; the clothing and food seemed scandalously overabundant.

American technology mass-produces an excess of inferior goods, which quickly wear out and must be constantly replaced. These are the products of the American economic miracle that measures standard of living in per capita consumption, inundating the poor in garbage. But the lumpen middle class can take it. When unfit for their original use, these cast-off consumer goods—the evidence of American industrial prowess—are saved, following one of my mother's dictums: "Save it—you never know when you might need it."

My parents' home sits in an area that used to be called Poverty Flats because the soil was too sandy for farming. Before the neighborhood of young executives and professionals grew up around them, you could still find the crumbled cement irrigation ditches and the metal artifacts of failed farms. Now their house can be identified—as can most houses of the middle-class poor—by the abundance of what, to most people, seems like junk. The yard is filled with things—fences, a rusty swing set, large rocks, a broken wheelbarrow—scavenged by my mother. Inside, not quite hidden away, are all kinds of broken pieces of furniture, castoffs from the neighbors, boxes of toys and clothes, odds and ends. These form the measurable wealth of the lumpen middle class, which refuses to join the throwaway society.

Hand-me-down clothing is stored in boxes, sorted, laundered, and stored again and again, as items are slowly diverted for various uses—dress-ups or Halloween costumes, piece goods for home-sewn clothing (my mother knows how to make skirts and quilts from men's trousers), and work clothes or rags for cleaning. My parents have resurrected entire Christmases from their stored debris: A plywood dollhouse complete with wallpaper and miniature furniture comes from the cabinets and other salvage of a neighbor's redecorating. Repairing, repainting, and adding a flounce to a discarded table makes an older girl's vanity. Scrap cork from a school construction site makes a boy's bulletin board, and two-by-fours become animal-shaped puzzles, painted the bright color of a neighbor's house trim. The work may not increase the gross national product, but it is fulfilling, giving the middle-class poor a sense of their own power.

Money is a matter of ambivalence to my parents. They wouldn't mind having more, but their income has been periodically increased or reduced without any apparent effect on their way of living. They seem to be mildly suspicious of money, as if it were a parlor trick played on them by government. Sometimes, in front of strangers, they will be embarrassingly frank about how little they have, but they are never looking for

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sympathy or charity. They routinely reject any government aid and avoid installment debt. After a short stint on Mormon welfare, they vowed never to accept assistance again.

They may take (and promptly pay back) an emergency loan from their children, but for the most part they maintain a fierce, if token, independence from the money economy. They do this by stonewalling—ignoring money entirely and, when confronted, denying they have any. Even small requests for ice cream or fast food are met with, "We can't afford it." They avoid entertainment that charges admission, preferring picnics. They do not travel except to reunions, where they camp or stay with relatives. Impulse buying is unknown to them. They have no use for charge cards. Except food and housing, the lumpen middle class can live essentially outside the money economy; so disposable income, like most economic measures, has little meaning applied to them.

My mother is given to elaborate schemes that establish the family's independence—planting a garden, quilting, and sewing. She bottles fruit every year, setting up the arcane equipment amid sugar, pectin, and boiling water. It is hard work. Her hands measure and pour, check for chips in the sterile bottle lips, adjust the lids and rings. She lavishes her time and attention on the fruit, arranging every peach half aesthetically in the bottle. Commercially canned goods might even be cheaper, but they don't prove she can live without money. "Don't save money unless it's for a purpose," she often said, and lacking a purpose, she has never saved a dime.

Toil is the law.
—Ruskin

Like his wife, my father has worked all his life, and worked hard. His bald crown hasn't lost a hair for years, and he isn't turning gray. His forearms still look strong after twenty years of bucking quarters of beef in the meat market, but the bursitis and the varicose veins won't let him cut meat anymore. For several years he has been in transition, adopting the profession of last resort—real estate. Now nearing sixty, he still works hard, supports his four remaining children, and never gets ahead.

He reads *Success Unlimited* magazine and believes he possesses Mark Haroldsen's "financial genius," but he has never given his memorized pitch to a homeowner. Months pass between sales—but it doesn't mean he isn't working hard. He does work, but somehow he doesn't get anything done. He comes home worn out, but all he has to show for it is another story—"How My Big Deal Fell Through."

The middle-class poor work throughout life but never get ahead—

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that's what it means to be middle-class poor. There must be real frustration in this, but somehow it is dissipated—in television, radio call-in shows, and a great deal of pro forma grumbling. Retirement is always only a few years off, and my father is counting on that, biding his time. I now believe he has a measure of contentment, although at one time I thought he was bitter.

When I determined to go to college, my father told me it was a waste of time. He thought I should get a job, do some work. Against his better judgment he lent me fifty dollars, drove me fifty miles in his old Mercury station wagon, and dropped me off in a college town, Provo, Utah. I survived only one semester at Brigham Young University before the financial aid office got me onto the rolls for a Federally Insured Student Loan. About the time I entered graduate school, my mother informed me that I hadn't "worked" my way through school; Uncle Sam had put me through. She didn't come to my graduation. She had to work.

"An honest day's work for an honest day's pay," my mother says, but her job as a keypunch operator is repetitive and meaningless. Although she would rather be at home, she consoles herself with aphorisms: "People were meant to work 'by the sweat of thy brow,' the Bible says." "Things are what they are." "What e'er thou art, act well thy part." To the lumpen middle class, work is not valued so much for what it does for the character or the pocketbook; work is what people do, no more.

There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics.
—Disraeli

I remember vividly my dad's discovery that his income fell below the official poverty line. He was too hurt to be angry. He blurted it out while reading the paper, and then he never mentioned it again.

The poor are slow to forgive insults, and they get back. They move imperceptibly, inexorably. I have never seen anyone as able to sustain rage as my father. Like other middle-class poor, he seems passive, but really he is watching. And he is fed up. He can tick off a list of federal encroachments, from HEW enrollment forms the kids bring home from school, to catalytic converters he isn't supposed to take off his car, to OSHA regulations that only end up limiting his hours at work. As far as he's concerned, Grandpa was better off quit of the land in southern Utah. You can't just own property anymore; you've got to defend it from the MX, the DOE, the BLM, the SCS, as well as the IRS.

My father didn't care for the War on Poverty, whose programs created an entirely new class of "well-off" poor, middle-class people with middle-class ways who make a middle-class living on government

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programs for the statutory poor. They are able to do it because they understand the programs. The middle-class poor do not—they don't care to. What business has the government placing them below some Mason-Dixon poverty line and then waging "war" on them, of all things. "Aren't things bad enough?" my dad asks. Of course they are, and the flood of government statistics won't let the middle-class poor forget it. As long as their pretensions to middle-class respectability went unchallenged, life in America was tolerable. Now they are indignant.

The lumpen middle class is not given to carefully hedged moral positions. They know they are right, for one thing, and they do not suffer insecurities. They have in common a fervent otherworldliness, as found in Mormonism, evangelism, Spiritualism, or any other form of adamant fundamentalism. My parents believe in tithing their income to support their church, but they would never give money to politicians' causes. Their political influence is felt only indirectly, and only on issues the church defines as moral. This mixture of politics and sin gave rise to Mormon activism on the ERA and sustains groups like the Moral Majority. But if people like my parents are its foundation, the resurgent right wing will quickly fragment. Like most middle-class poor, my parents don't care for politics.

The poor always ye have with you.
—John 12:8

My parents won't take food stamps, even though they qualify for them; they even balk at unemployment benefits. They do believe in charity, but they know that government is incapable of dispensing it. They will accept the earned income credit only because it is imposed along with the indignities of the income tax. Wealth should be allowed to flow to those best equipped to use it well, my parents believe, and they would prefer to let the market decide, even though they always come out the losers. Riches gained any other way—from charity, gambling, or government transfer payments—they consider ill-gotten, and they know that no amount of money would change their ways much.

Money is neither the cause of nor the solution to middle-class poverty. I doubt the condition is either caused or in need of solving. Suffering yes, of course, but not middle-class poverty. It is simply a way of living, and some individuals take to it naturally. In my family some do; some don't. I have never been able to see things as my parents do, but I know it makes sense to them. Lumpen-middle-class status has its allures.

My parents' philosophy is passive. In the face of constant frustration, it offers contentment. It also provides certainty. People who are sure of

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what is right can be less discriminating. They accept our shoddy material culture freely. In some ways my parents' lives seem incredibly free to me. I am not as certain about my ideas, and my only security is in discriminating—among things and ideas. Unlike my parents, I hold back, always cautious.

America wears its lumpen-middle-class poor like an undergarment, everywhere present, but visible only at awkward moments. They are our national secret. They embody our darkest prejudices and disprove our fondest economic theories. Liberal legislation of the past twenty years has by turns scourged them or pushed them aside in favor of their ethnic peers. They aren't affected. The lumpen middle class is immune to the pen, the sword, to philanthropy, government programs, utopian and Marxist philosophies, to history and economics.

He is now fast rising from affluence to poverty.
—Mark Twain

It has only been a short while since I was thrown out into the indifferent middle class, advanced degree in hand. After being away at school for so long, I had more than one poor acquaintance say of me: "I heard he got a rare disease and died."

There is something unprincipled, even sinister, about moving from class to class in America. The one left behind is insulted, the one set out for affronted. My parents don't understand my life. "What do you *do* for a living?" they ask. My relatives think I'm stuck up, too good. Their scrutiny makes me no less an outsider among the lumpen middle class than among other groups, where I am a curiosity, something from television come to life.

The American stereotypes of the upwardly mobile are comic—the social climber, "The Beverly Hillbillies"—and pathetic. They predict the fall after the rise from rags to riches. Boredom, dissipation, corruption, insanity, death—anyone who rises must be struck down, left whispering "Rosebud" and yearning for what was left behind. The middle-class poor believe this, and they don't seem to have the middle-class saying, "That won't happen to me." So I am skittish. Although I know what I left, I don't know what I entered—middle, upper-middle, lower-upper, upper, old money, new money—they're all indistinguishable to me.

Whenever I leave home, my mother calls out her charms: *Be good. Take care. Keep in touch.* If she were to read this (of course she never will), she might be momentarily distressed. "We're not poor," she would say, lifting her small frame defiantly. Then, at once conciliatory, she would say, "Well, people don't understand." I would admire her wise

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eyes and luxuriant gray hair, knowing that she had once again banished me to that vast world of ideas foreign to her own, even though I can predict everything she says: *There's nothing wrong with old things as long as they're clean. Well, at least we won't starve. We've nothing to be ashamed of.* I hear them all, always. But she would be right; my version is distorted. No one can see poverty as do the middle-class poor. Perhaps it is the analysis itself—something so foreign to the lumpen-middle-class way of life—that sets the reality on its ear.

Listening Ignorant

VERNON SCANNELL

Such offerings we must be grateful for
Who cannot try to analyze, assess
Complexities of means: to us, a score
Is baffling code. These sumptuous fabrics dress
The silence in brocades or steely veils
which ravish us with shrewd complicities,
Whose end is to affirm. Others may know—
Certainly the ones whose task it is
To fashion or display those robes of snow
And sensual velvet, icy filigree—
That other language and its mysteries
From which long consolations flow; but we
Can only offer voluntary submission,
And afterwards, our wild illiterate paean
Of slapping palms and blindly hammering soles,
Crude concerting of thanks and praise and awe,
Cry, "More! Encore; Encore!" and vainly try
To voice dazed praise for sounds made by and for
The only animal which knows that it must die.

✪ VERNON SCANNELL has received the Heinemann Award and the Cholmondoley Poetry Prize for his poetry. His most recent volumes of poems are *New and Collected Poems* and *Winterlude.*

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Piano Lessons

BARON WORMSER

"The Johnsons have her and so must we":
That is how I came to know Miss Lee.
I was to play the piano, if not well
Then enough so that my mother could tell
Another mother I was taking again this year—
It was an expense, but I was a dear.
Miss Lee would coax me, and I would cry.
"I can't do any better however I try;
It isn't in me," I'd say and sit down once more.
Miss Lee would motion and start to pace the floor
And we were off again, manacled to one
Another by our common sense of misfortune.
I knew it was harder for her than for me;
She had to watch as I defiled what she esteemed.
At night she played for herself alone;
But even then the music was not wholly her own,
For the neighbor boys would gather on her walk
And at some bravura passage begin to squawk,
Crow, shout, huzzah, yelp, bray,
Until she came out on her porch and they ran away.
Her talent, the town observed, kept her poor.
Once she cursed me, another time she slammed a door
And ran upstairs. I heard her rolling on her bed.
When she came down, she smiled sadly and said,
"That's enough for today." Next week came.
I loitered outside until she called my name
And I shuffled in. "Someday you will be great,"
She said and I felt she was talking straight
Past me and into another world where
There were no clumsy fingers or fidgety glares
At the clock on the wall or hectoring half notes
Or folded dollar bills. I took off my coat,
And we walked into the room where the piano stood
For all that we wanted to do yet never would.

✪ BARON WORMSER's first collection of poems, *The White Words*, will be published by Houghton Mifflin in January 1983.

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Alain: For and Against

JOHN WEIGHTMAN

Émile-Auguste Chartier (1868–1951), the philosopher-essayist who wrote under the pen name Alain, is a unique case of a French intellectual figure celebrated in his own country but virtually unknown in the English-speaking world, even today, more than thirty years after his death. Yet he was one of the most prolific writers of his generation. He invented a particular genre, the short essay or *propos*, of which he produced some five thousand examples, in addition to turning out other more structured works. Since the 1950s, the Gallimard publishing house has reissued the bulk of his writings in the special Pléïade edition, and this is the recognized sign of admission to classic status. His name is familiar, of course, to English and American students of French culture who have lived in France, many of whom, like myself, were introduced to his works at an early stage; but no one, as far as I know, has produced an extended study of him in English. Nor does the British Museum Library catalogue record more than two attempts to present him in English translation: *Mars ou la guerre jugée*, a series of *propos* on the psychological attitudes behind war, was brought out in 1930 as *Mars or the Truth About War*, and the philosophico-anthropological study, *Les Dieux*, appeared in 1975 as *The Gods;* but neither volume seems to have made much impact in England or America. If we believe that all great writers—especially prose writers, whose work can usually, to some extent, survive in translation—must sooner or later have a universal appeal, this raises a problem: was, or is, Alain's reputation within France a local cultural illusion that would repay analysis, or, on the contrary, was he a truly great man, whom the Anglo-American public has yet to discover?

There is one immediate circumstance that goes some way toward explaining the anomaly. Alain was not simply, or even primarily, a writer. He was a teacher, a *professeur de lycée*, and more particularly a *professeur de philosophie*. His fame depended in the first place on his prestige in the classroom, and his writings were in large measure an extension of his oral instruction. In France, under the system in force until the Second World War, teachers of philosophy were especially important, since it was they who introduced seventeen- or eighteen-year-olds to the major works of world philosophy and trained them in the general discussion of ideas and moral issues that has traditionally been such a notable feature of French life. Chartier's career, in outline, followed the usual pattern. He was a lower-middle-class boy, the son of a Normandy veterinary surgeon, and brought up in the country against a peasant background. His academic ability won him a place at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris; he passed *l'agrégation*, the national competitive examination that gave access to posts in secondary education, and was appointed in the normal way to a succession of schools in the provinces. He must have made a name for himself quite early because, by the turn of the century, he had graduated to Paris, and in 1909 he was given the most coveted position in the system, that of *professeur de philosophie* at the Lycée Henri Quatre, the outstanding boys' school and the most famous of all forcing grounds for young intellectuals.

He stayed there—with a break for war service between 1914 and 1917—until his retirement in 1933. During the postwar years, he also taught certain classes at the best girls'

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schools. The intense centralization of French education meant that the great majority of academically gifted pupils passed through the Parisian *lycées* on their way to the *grandes écoles* and the university. Alain, being so strategically placed, came to exercise an enormous personal influence. His classes had such a reputation that they attracted outsiders, that is, members of the general public and pupils playing truant from other schools. So magnetic, indeed, was his personality that his prestige quite eclipsed that of most university professors, and it was generally agreed that there had been no comparable draw since the early years of the century when Henri Bergson lectured at the Collège de France. Eventually, there were few people of note in the intellectual world who had not been taught at some stage either by Alain himself or by one of his many fervent disciples. He loomed so large that his presence could even seem irksome to a few jealously independent spirits. Jean-Paul Sartre, for instance, explains that he deliberately avoided Alain's classes so as not to come under his sway, although one may suspect that the twin doctrines of absolute freedom and social commitment, later developed by Sartre, owe something, either directly or indirectly, to Alain. However, most people were glad to accept Alain's teaching and, with rare exceptions, responded to it positively. This being so, it was natural that they should approach his written works in a spirit of admiration and respect.

My own experience as a foreign student may have some relevance here. When I first went to France in 1935, I was taught by one of Alain's ex-pupils who so revered the master that he had given the name Alain to his eldest son. In England, I had encountered one or two good teachers, but this man's classes were a revelation to me. Whatever the subject under discussion, there was never a dull moment, and ideas poured forth in a constant, jovial stream. This made me wonder with awe what it must have been like to drink at the fountainhead, and I was immediately converted to a belief in Alain. But his writings, when I came to look at them, were something of a puzzle and a disappointment, and I remember the effort I had to make to bring myself even to hint at this. However, my mentor assured me that I should have faith. He, who had sat at Alain's feet, could vouch for the fact that the philosopher was a great man. If I persevered in my reading, the works would eventually fall into place as the compelling expression of a whole universe of thought. Things have not turned out quite like that, but because I continued to admire Alain through my admiration for his epigone, it took me years to see him in any sort of perspective, and even now I cannot be sure that I have got him properly into focus.

What Alain illustrates is the phenomenon of *le maître à penser*, which is perhaps more in evidence in France than elsewhere. In one sense, it is a peculiar virtue of the French that, because of their intense intellectual tradition and their feeling that they all descend ultimately from Descartes, they should have heroes of the mind as well as stars of the theater, the cinema, pop music, and sport. It is also understandable that young people especially should polarize their attention on charismatic figures in the intellectual field, since the star system, with its spontaneous partisanship, simplifies the welter of the given. But, in another sense, this means that the intellectual life itself tends to take on show-business characteristics. Alain became a star, in the first place, because of his great ability as a teacher of adolescents, as a *réveilleur d'esprits*, and this implies that he had certain features that appealed to young people as daring, exciting, and unorthodox. If I may anticipate a view I shall amplify later, I suspect that, through achieving this particular kind of stardom in early middle age, he was isolated from criticism by his peers and confirmed in some of his less satisfactory tendencies. His enormous prestige also inhibited impartial discussion of his role and his writings because his pupils were everywhere and, with one or two exceptions, never publicly questioned the fervent admiration of their youth or subjected his works to objective analysis, even though, in many cases, they might have gone on to do things of which Alain would certainly have disapproved. For example, André Maurois, a very early disciple and the author of the introduction to the first Pléïade volume, had become a member of the French Academy, in spite of Alain's ironical comments on all institutions of that kind. One may suppose that the memory Alain's pupils had of him was associated with the springtime of their careers and

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that they could not express the slightest reservation about him or his writings without seeming to deny the intellectual lyricism of adolescence. His ready admission to the Pléïade series may have been, in some measure, an act of piety that later generations will question.

By now, having lived through the reigns of several subsequent *maîtres à penser*—Jean-Paul Sartre, Albert Camus, Jacques Lacan, and Roland Barthes, all of whom taught at some point in their careers—and having observed the current luminary, Michel Foucault, I have developed a keen mistrust of the phenomenon, while recognizing that it may be unavoidable. The temptation to commit oneself to a guru, particularly in youth, is no doubt universal; it is a sort of intellectual equivalent of falling in love; but in the end, all fan clubs are breeding grounds for falsehood and have a bad effect on both the guru and his disciples. Of the five writers mentioned above, only one, Albert Camus, was clearly and painfully aware of the danger of adulation, which produces subjective dogmatism. In fact, this is precisely the theme of his last completed work, *La Chute*. If the other four writers are still difficult to evaluate, it is partly because of the haze of emotionalism that surrounded them as leaders of thought and that reacted only too obviously on their writing.

In Alain's case, there is a degree of paradox. He declares in his autobiography, *Histoire de mes pensées*, that he had no wish to recruit disciples and, in fact, never really enjoyed being a teacher. Besides, the center of his doctrine, all during his career, was the principle of individual liberty and responsibility, combined with truth to oneself. It can be argued that he remained at heart an anarchist, who discovered collective realities only by a process of ratiocination, and that his young audiences took to him instinctively because they sensed this unquenchable rebelliousness. However, he never appealed to his classes in a modern, comradely way, since he believed in keeping relations between teacher and pupils strictly formal and impersonal. In this respect, he may have modeled himself on a master by whom he had been enormously impressed in his own school days. This was Jules Lagneau, a philosopher who wrote very little and would by now no doubt have been quite forgotten had Alain not published a small volume, *Souvenirs*, celebrating him as an intellectual genius in exactly the same tone as Alain's pupils were later to celebrate him. But the crypto-anarchist was, in practice, authoritarian. From 1917 onward, he always spoke ex cathedra, did not allow discussion in his classes, and overawed his pupils with his dominant personality, even when he was preaching nondominance.

A curious feature of Alain's spontaneous, or unconscious, dogmatism was his decision, which he explains at length, to treat any author commented on in class as being infallible, that is, wholly true in his own way and needing only elucidation. This corresponded to his oft-repeated dictum that "everything is true," by which he meant that even wrong perceptions may be right in their given context. An example he never tired of using was that of a stick that appears bent if partly immersed in water, even when it is known to be straight. The illusion is optically true, although factually wrong, and this illustrates the essential point that there is no such thing as a unitary grasp of the external world or of mental phenomena; the problem is how to establish a hierarchy of simultaneous "truths." This is a valuable pedagogic principle. It is undoubtedly better, in the first instance, to suppose that anything said by Plato, for example, is justifiable from his point of view and in his cultural situation. This is the willing suspension of disbelief necessary for any understanding and is much to be preferred to the itch to refute, which Alain, correctly or not, denounced as the besetting sin of most of his fellow teachers of philosophy. However, as he practiced it, the principle led to some questionable consequences.

In the first place, since he concentrated on the texts themselves, without being much interested in relating them to their cultural contexts (insofar as these can be reconstituted), he tended to reinterpret them according to his own lights, so that his enthusiastic, but never very particular, commentaries on Plato, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Comte, et cetera, seem to run these very dissimilar thinkers into the same Alain-like blur, in spite of the contrary implications of another of his favorite dicta: "Differences are more instructive than resemblances." He was not historically minded. Here and there in the *propos*, he

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scores telling points against the "factual," pseudoscientific, overconfident school of historians that was strong in France in his day, but he appears not to see the absurdist point that, while history is inevitably approximate and always grossly simplified, it is absolutely indispensable. It is inseparable from thought itself, which is always groping to reconstitute the past. Since we live in time, what happened yesterday, or what I think about the book I read last week, is a historical problem. At the level of separate cultures, all thought, in the last resort, has to be history of thought. (The point is made with admirable clarity in the intellectual autobiography of the English philosopher-historian R. G. Collingwood.) But Alain was strangely indifferent to this intellectual dimension. He was a dogmatic humanist who constantly reasserted the fundamental immutability of human nature, in opposition to the believers in progress or decline, or in any form of significant evolution. Culture, he keeps saying, depends on man, and man does not change; he exercises his freedom within a permanent framework. In this respect Alain stands at the opposite pole from Sartre and existentialism; Sartre declares that man is free at any moment to fashion himself as he wills, that there is no such thing as a given human nature, and that the belief in human nature is no more than a reactionary illusion of "bourgeois humanism" as it has existed since the eighteenth century.

Both of these points of view appear to me to be too extreme in their opposite ways, and I would support the intermediate hypothesis put forward by Claude Lévi-Strauss. In the deepest sense, human nature is probably definable, but its possibilities are so multiform that no culture ever expresses, or has expressed, them fully. Each distinct culture represents a particular and limited crystallization of certain possibilities. The historical urge consists in trying to understand crystallizations other than that in which one happens to have grown up, in order to throw light on them all, including one's own. And, in this sense, the past of one's own country may be as exotic as any foreign territory. There is perpetual change, but no overriding logic of history, such as the Hegelian self-realization of the World Spirit, or inevitable progress in the Marxist sense, or even a clearly distinguishable sequence of ages, such as Comte postulated. But the perpetual change is significant and needs to be elucidated if we are going to understand anything at all. There remains, of course, the very difficult problem of historical relativity ("crystallization" is too static a metaphor); the historian himself is on a moving platform of time while he is trying to assess other movements—the shifting is trying to assess the shifting. Lévi-Strauss hints at this dilemma without suggesting a solution, and indeed there may be none. But I cannot help feeling it a limitation in Alain that he does not recognize these complexities. Also, while it is understandable that, with his static concept of human nature, he should admire Plato, it is less easy to see how he can praise essentially evolutionary or dialectical thinkers en bloc without distorting them unconsciously to fit his own pattern; in fact, he admits at times that he is not worried by the possibility of reading his own ideas into his favorite authors. That pattern itself may be seen as a consequence of a certain cultural crystallization: the French post-Enlightenment tradition in which the constant nature of man tended to be assumed as a necessary condition for the elaboration of the moral law.

In the second place, Alain tends to set up a canon of consecrated writers—the philosophers already quoted together with such literary figures as Montaigne, Rousseau, Balzac, Stendhal, Dickens, and Valéry—who are the repositories of the permanent truth about human nature and against whom no criticism is to be leveled. His procedure is comparable to that of a recent English *maître à penser* Dr. F. R. Leavis, who established a list of writers to be admitted to the Great Tradition of the English novel. Here again, the effects are partly good. Alain's repetitious insistence enables him to make some interesting new points about these very well known authors. But he can also be willfully partisan. What he says, for instance, in *Propos de littérature* about Rousseau's novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* strikes me as being demonstrably wrongheaded, ignoring as it does the moral complexity of that rather monstrous and very eighteenth-century work. At the same time, he has a number of bêtes noires—Taine, Sainte-Beuve, Renan, Flaubert, et cetera—whom he frequently dismisses without discussion, as if they were self-evidently beyond the pale. In other words, instead of evaluating the details

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of the given work, he tends to take the author as the unit of excellence or execration, and this is a vicious critical principle. Since Rousseau wrote *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, Alain decrees that it must be good and argues accordingly. (However, Judith Robinson, in her Sorbonne thesis, *Alain, lecteur de Balzac et de Stendhal*, shows, mainly on the basis of oral evidence, that in the case of Stendhal, Alain disliked the *Journal* and confessional writings. The reader cannot guess this from his uniformly eulogistic approach. Alain chose to ignore Stendhal's self-analysis, although it may have had some relevance for the composition of the novels.)

Alain is also on record as saying of Simone Weil, one of his brilliant pupils, that she had only to put pen to paper to produce writing of genius, whereas it is clear, even to admirers of Simone Weil, that her genuine insight and pathological features need to be carefully disentangled before one can arrive at any valid critical judgment of her. Incidentally, Alain passed on his absolutist tendency to Simone Weil; she, in her turn, celebrates Rousseau as one of the very few "pure" spirits in French literature. Rousseau was undoubtedly a genius, but he is also remarkable for his fascinating impurities.

Alain may have developed these characteristics partly through the demagogic temptation to sharpen the distinction between the "good" and the "bad" when addressing young people. But other factors probably came into play as well. His temperament, he admits, was whimsical, impulsive, and impatient of the traditional academic approach. Also, at a relatively early age, he acquired a particular intellectual technique. Although he believed in the virtues of hard work, he was unable to undertake any sustained effort in composition at the beginning of his career because of attacks of extreme fatigue, which convinced him that he had not long to live. The disability later turned out to be due to ear trouble, but by then he had long become accustomed to the *propos* as his normal form of written expression. While still in the provinces, he took part in political and educational activities outside the *lycée*, at first through conviction, but also through the need to find relief from mental exhaustion. As part of this extracurricular amusement, he was invited to write newspaper articles, and he hit on the form of the *propos*, a short essay of about seven hundred fifty words on any subject under the sun, which he could compose in one sitting. These mini-articles were first published in *La Dépêche de Rouen*, and they were naturally colored by his philosophical teaching. He himself claims, with a certain boastfulness that breaks out from time to time in *Histoire de mes pensées*, that he raised the newspaper article to the level of metaphysics. This is true enough, if we take metaphysics in the general sense of serious reflection about any aspect of life. But it leaves open the question of the value of the *propos* as an intellectual genre, especially in the light of the rules that Alain evolved for himself.

He made it a condition that each *propos* should be a complete improvisation with no crossings out or corrections. This was partly because he felt that the tension thus created gave his style a sort of lift, and partly, no doubt, because of his principle that "everything is true." If he could not go back on his initial sentence, even if he was not absolutely sure of it, he had to find a way of "saving" it, that is, of ingeniously molding the subsequent argument in order to give it, retrospectively, a justifiable meaning. Each *propos* is, then, a sort of gamble, and he admits that several, even of the published ones, did not come off, although he refrains from pointing out which. One could also say that, when they are successful, they often achieve their effect through a kind of sophistry that amuses and stimulates for a moment and then becomes less appealing when it is repeated in various forms and cannot be convincingly related to a wider pattern of thought. Some of the best of the early *propos* have the charm of perfectly expressed little moral fables. Many, belonging to all periods, offer short and dense sequences of statement of a high quality. Jules Romains, in his panoramic novel about French life in the first half of the century, *Les Hommes de bonne volonté*, makes one of his heroes, a young *normalien*, refer very aptly to "sentences by Alain, stuck together like crystals." But, at their worst, the *propos* may be sententious, even hectoring, and are too often rounded off by vague or obscure generalizations forced on the author by the limitations of the allotted span of words. After reading any series grouped around a single theme—edu-

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cation, politics, literature, et cetera—one may be left with the feeling that Alain's thoughts on these subjects have remained tantalizingly incomplete, because arguments are developed in short spurts and then broken off.

Suggestiveness, rather than developed statement, may be excellent as an oral teaching technique, but it is not so satisfactory on the printed page. With Alain, impressionism and the constant shelving of unsolved difficulties becomes a mannerism; in his later writings, he is only too ready to be gnomic and to hint at meanings beyond the limits of normal expression. In *Histoire de mes pensées,* he elevates this practice to the level of a principle and argues that a sound and solid obscurity is often to be preferred to clarity. In this respect, he eventually came to appear as an opponent of *la clarté française,* in spite of the fact that he continued to champion Descartes, the original master of French philosophical clarity. At the same time, he put himself into the modernist, avant-garde literary camp, where hermeticism has been a dominant tendency since the days of Mallarmé. (This is why his contemporary, the out-and-out rationalist Julien Benda, launched a violent attack on him, with particular reference to the style of *Système des beaux-arts,* in *La France byzantine.*)

The cult of obscurity, which began in poetry as an understandable reaction against the rhetorical transparency of nineteenth-century Romantic verse, has long since spread to French analytical and expository prose, which, in the hands of some practitioners such as Jacques Lacan or Roland Barthes, may be as sibylline as the most abstruse poetic formulations. Alain was not as extreme as these two, and his liking for obscurity was rather more noticeable in middle life, when he took an interest in "difficult" poetry and became personally acquainted with Paul Valéry and other representatives of the literary avant-garde. Sometimes, when the opaque nature of his writing is related to a genuinely complex issue, one can feel that it is justified and that a certain limit of expression has been reached, as in good hermetic verse. But the danger of hermeticism as a method is that it can become a kind of facility; instead of striving for clarity and being genuinely defeated by the inherent difficulty of the subject, the writer may fall into the habit of depending on dubiety and mystery as a means of pseudopoetic effect, as a narcissistic indulgence in the abundant uncertainties of all language. Alain is less prone to this than Lacan or Barthes, but it is a feature of his prose and may help to explain the apparent lack of keenness to translate his works, since nothing is more difficult to render in another language than a margin of possibly gratuitous mystery. However, while Alain may be difficult to translate, Lacan and Barthes, who add punning to hermeticism, are, strictly speaking, untransposable into English, and the so-called translations of their most characteristic works bear only an approximate relationship to the originals.

Given the circumstances I have outlined, it was perhaps inevitable that Alain should have evolved the *propos* as his main form of written expression, or more accurately as his only form, since the books that purport to be structured, such as *Système des beaux-arts* or *Les Idées et les âges,* are made up of short chapters only loosely articulated into larger units and open to the criticisms I have suggested. But one might hazard a deeper, more philosophical explanation for his choice of the genre. Although at first sight so far removed from existentialism, he not infrequently adopts an existentialist stance by emphasizing that all thought exists in time and therefore comes into being and perishes from moment to moment. All linguistic expression is a function of time. A written sentence only relives by becoming part of the existential temporal sequence of the reader, with all the possibilities of misunderstanding that this implies. An author, rereading his own work, is subject to the same existential uncertainties: how can the self of today be sure of understanding the self of yesterday? et cetera. This line of argument, if followed far enough, leads to the extreme absurdist conclusion that "truth" is what is valid for the instant and that consciousness is a series of discrete events. This process of atomization can appear, in the first instance, to annihilate systematic thought and to make a nonsense of morality, as existentialist literature has amply demonstrated. Alain never openly formulates the issue in this way, but he can often be felt moving in this direction, in spite of being dogmatically assertive and strongly moralistic in certain respects. It could be that the *propos,* a short essay pinpointing a moment of perception, was his

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instinctive reaction to the dilemma, a Heraclitus-like compromise on the part of an otherwise Platonic idealist.

He himself maintained that his philosophy could not be systematized, because it only existed "in action," and more especially in his oral teaching, not in the *propos*. But if the *propos* are metaphysical, as he also said, the reader cannot help looking for the outlines, at least, of a system. This is true even for the reader who is a convinced absurdist and who therefore accepts the principle of "not knowing" as the ultimate experience. Since that experience itself can only be formulated through language, absurdism, too, is a function of language; and language can therefore be used, with relative confidence, to make the widest possible synthesis. Instead of suggesting such a synthesis, Alain's thousands of *propos* are, in the last resort, like the beads of a broken necklace that one has to unscramble as best one can, with the unhappy feeling that a quantity of clouded glass may have got mixed up with the pearls.

The *professeur de philsophie* has, or had, a double function: to explain how things came to be as they are, since there must be a valid reason for everything that exists; and to teach morality, that is, the reasons for preferring some things to others. Although the doctrine that "everything is true" may seem to indicate that Alain stressed the first role rather than the second, the overall tone of his writing is strongly moralistic, too much so, perhaps, for readers unacquainted with, or unsympathetic to, the French tradition of republican virtue dating back to the Revolution, and beyond to Rousseau's seminal text, *Du contrat social*. Alain constantly emphasizes the tension between the individual, whose first duty is to be free and true to himself, and the necessary constraints of society. He does not say theatrically, like Sartre, that we are "condemned" to be free; he echoes Rousseau and Renouvier to the effect that individual freedom and the rejection of determinism is the only hypothesis compatible with our inherent consciousness of spiritual autonomy. While strongly anticlerical in his earlier phase, he was always a deist in the sense that God is the Universal Something, inside and outside himself, that the individual postulates when trying to think or feel most genuinely. At the same time, he was a Stoic, in that he preached serene acceptance of the play of natural forces, and even considered happiness as a sort of hygienic obligation. I remember once lending his *Propos sur le bonheur* to a distressed woman friend, who returned the volume half-read with the comment that it was "*primaire*." No doubt she would have said the same about Bertrand Russell's *The Conquest of Happiness*. Alain and Russell share what one might call a male-chauvinist determination not to be miserable and an insistence on distinguishing between the two forms of necessity: the absolute necessity of the workings of the universe, which we can only contemplate, and the relative necessity of human conventions, which the virtuous citizen agrees to obey provisionally while always retaining his right to call them into question.

Alain produces innumerable variations on this theme. For instance, he declares himself a radical, not a socialist, because he believed in a compromise between private property—being true to individual human nature—and civic morality—recognition of the citizen's proper subordination to the state. Instead of grumbling about paying taxes, he says, we should be delighted to live in a community where certain essential services are ensured collectively in return for a reasonable contribution. This is an echo of *Du contrat social*, where Rousseau makes the same point very forcefully by arguing that the individual who finds himself condemned to death for a murder that he has committed should go gratefully to his execution and congratulate himself on living in a society in which the rule of law prevails. Alain would no doubt add that the convicted murderer should not be in awe of the judge, the jury, or the executioner, since they are his equals, citizens like himself, who just happen to be administering the law—as a policeman directs the traffic. In *Propos sur l'éducation* he is cynically commonsensical about examinations, which he presents as conventional exercises that the candidate should understand as such and prepare for accordingly, provided he really wants the ends to which examinations lead, which may not be the best ends. In his attitude toward himself, he applied a sort of harsh wisdom. There is an admirable passage in an early letter to a friend where he says that it is unfitting for a teacher to try to "make a career" for himself;

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a teacher—that is, a *professeur de philosophie*—is someone who should be happy to accept a living wage in order to think on behalf of the community. This could be generalized as a motto for all academics. Although he believed in the family as the natural unit of society and enjoyed many relationships with women, he never had children and married only very late in life. It is clear from the posthumously published, early notebooks, *Cahiers de Lorient*, that commitment to a particular woman and to offspring would have been irksome for his willful temperament, but it would also have compromised his vocation as a lay monk of thought. Finally, the supreme proof of his civic virtue is that, while detesting war, he volunteered for active service in 1914 and served for three years as an ordinary soldier, first in the heavy artillery and then as a front-line telephonist.

All this is coherent enough, but as he grew older and more famous, he seems to have become less self-critical and to have undergone a slight "dissociation of sensibility" in the opposite directions of increased tetchiness and incipient sentimentality. He had always had a choleric nature, which tended to express itself in outbreaks of intolerance and irascibility—*des sautes d'humeur*, as he said. One of the rare ex-pupils of Alain who disliked him was a onetime colleague of mine, later a distinguished writer; he said he found Alain overbearing and could never forgive him for having one day dismissed Rimbaud, in front of a whole class, as a poet of no importance. Conversely, Alain's desire to understand and his confident idiosyncrasy caused him to lean over backward in the effort to be fair to the Fascists and the Nazis before the Second World War. It is true that, having lived through the First World War, he clung desperately to pacifism. Also, ever since the Dreyfus Affair, he had had a profound mistrust of the French military hierarchy and the governing elite. Perhaps, too, his claim to understand human nature made it impossible for him to apprehend the unprecedented extremes of evil to which the totalitarian nations were heading. Whatever the explanation, some of the *propos* he wrote during that period make rather embarrassing reading today, and it is a slight blot on his memory that he should have allowed one or two of his articles to appear in the phony, German-sponsored *Nouvelle Revue Française*, edited by the Fascist sympathizer, Drieu La Rochelle. (Raymond Aron, who had known Alain without being his pupil, criticized him fiercely in the French wartime periodical, *La France libre*, writing under the name of René Avord. After Alain's death, he wrote another critical, but more balanced, article in *Hommage à Alain*.) Alain even went back a little on his republican virtue and displayed a weakness for strong leaders; at least, that is how I interpret a curious passage in *Portraits de famille* where he says that he now believes the best government to be at once aristocratic and democratic, since it is controlled by the most able with the consent of the governed. He concludes: "In my view, the statesman who has best understood and practised this new democracy is Stalin, following on from Lenin." This unexpected shift from democracy to autocracy may not be new at all, but another echo from Rousseau. It will be remembered that, in the latter, and weaker, part of *Du contrat social*, the Legislator suddenly pops up like a deus ex machina to give form to the general will. Be that as it may, it is sad to have to number Alain among the people who were taken in by Stalin.

At the same time that Alain's political opinions become more disparate, the general quality of the *propos* seems to deteriorate. Familiar ideas tend to recur in much the same words, but with a greater reliance on enigmatic throwaway formulas. He expatiates again and again on art and natural phenomena in a vague and euphoric style that is neither properly analytical nor fully poetic in its own right. This tendency had already been present in *Système des beaux-arts* and *Les Idées et les âges*, but it becomes much more pronounced in *Entretiens chez le sculpteur*, *Vingt leçons sur les beaux-arts*, *Entretiens au bord de la mer*, and *Les Dieux*, which really belong to a hybrid genre of poeticized meditation, drawing on rather archaic, pastoral sensibilities. Not that pastoral sensibilities are necessarily to be criticized in themselves, but in Alain's case they represent something of a mystic retreat from his hard initial stoicism and veer toward a Rousseauistic acceptance of Nature, however indefinable that term may be, as being by definition good. Perhaps we can sum up the change by saying that the robust republican with a clear view of necessity had, to

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some extent, turned into an opinionated rhetorician with an inclination to applaud the universe. *Les Dieux*, which he wrote after his retirement and obviously thought of as a kind of masterpiece, is a disappointing illustration of all the weaknesses of the *propos* form.

Having formulated this judgment, I am surprised by its harshness and also by my temerity in criticizing a writer who was central to my own education, such as it was. But Alain taught freedom and honesty, and these two principles now oblige me to admit that he did not, as far as I can see, think his way through to a fully valid philosophy, or evolve an entirely satisfactory form of literature. I do not expect him eventually to be recognized as a great writer of international status. However, he certainly deserves to be better known in the English-speaking world than he is, and it is to be hoped that, sooner or later, some Anglo-American publisher will bring out a properly organized anthology of the best *propos*, together with a version of *Histoire des mes pensées*, a volume that is very worthy of a place in the international literature of intellectual autobiography.

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Too Near a Certain Death

SUSAN KATZ

Moonlight mounts the windowsill,
a ghostly blade of light that cuts
across the carpet, sliding toward
the bed where you are curled
in sleep and I, awake, watch
as it moves unimpeded down the length
of bed, hallowing the space
between us; somewhere

I have read that lovers
sleep like seeds warm in the soil
of one another's embrace; we have always
turned our backs in search of solitude;
at first, I wondered if we feared we might
divulge some secret through
our skin, or touch
a wound that, hidden, had not healed; awake

we bend often toward love; probing
the spot where pain and pleasure
merge, giving, taking back, forgiveness
like a benediction on our lips, and prayers;
and on those softer
nights explore, exposing gently what
in sleep we choose to hide; some call it

courting lies, this back-
to-back focusing on silent corners
of the room, as if believing that the body comes
to truth in sleep, and in a way it does;
always too near a certain death, one needs
to privately embrace the cold, one needs
to face the prospect of the grave; only
when we are still warm from where our hands
have left their mark, are we that brave.

✪ SUSAN KATZ's poetry collection *A Falling From Grace* was a finalist for the 1980 Walt Whitman Award. Her poems have appeared in *Bitterroot,* the *Kansas Quarterly,* and other journals.

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Hitler Becomes a Man

JOHN LUKACS

In his *Napoleon: For and Against*, composed during and after the Second World War, the Dutch historian Pieter Geyl asked himself whether what had happened to the historical reputation of Napoleon would someday happen to Hitler. Our answer is: yes and no. Yes: because more than thirty-six years after his demise, books about Hitler—not only histories and biographies but the strangest confections, including novels and poems—keep appearing in the Western (hardly any in the Eastern) world, more than had been published about Napoleon thirty or forty years after his death. No: because there has been, as yet, no serious or impressive attempt to rehabilitate Hitler. His reputation, unlike that of Napoleon, is bad enough so that even those who wish to rehabilitate him (such as David Irving) go about this—as I have written elsewhere—slyly, by attacking the reputation of those men who, whether abroad or within Germany, had opposed Hitler. (On a higher level of scholarship, there is the German historian Andreas Hillgruber, whose rehabilitative efforts are concealed within his footnotes, suggesting that, in this or that instance, Hitler the strategist had no other alternative than what he chose.)

The apologists do not get very far. To rehabilitate Hitler is unthinkable. But it is not enough to say this. Whatever is unthinkable must, on occasion, be thought about. Those who say that the continued and frequent interest in Hitler represents a perverse, and perhaps even vicious, symptom, especially in Germany, are wrong. Hitler was, after all, the most extraordinary statesman in the history of the twentieth century: he alone caused the Second World War under the shadow of which we still live; he was more interesting than Stalin, just as German national socialism was more interesting than Russian communism, and just as the history of the Third Reich is much more interesting and dramatic than the history of the Soviet Union. By "interesting" I do not mean anything approbatory. That evil is dramatic and interesting is not merely the result of morbid curiosity; evil is dramatic and interesting because it belongs to human nature. Too many people, perhaps especially in the United States, have simply expelled Hitler from the human race, dismissing him as abnormal or mad. This is wrong for many reasons, and it reflects poorly on the dismissers themselves. By declaring Hitler mad, they demonstrate, however unthinkingly, that they do not really want to think about him seriously at all. By brushing the historical Hitler under the rug, they spare themselves the serious business of thinking—and, indirectly, they spare Hitler of his responsibility. For if Hitler were really mad, how can we condemn him for what he did and said, especially today, when much criminality is treated as if it were psychic illness, and the fate of the criminal is relegated to psychiatry and not to law?

Of course Hitler was not mad. I am writing as a historian, aware as I am not only of the unhistorical (and unreal) character of much that goes with psychologizing nowadays but also of the profound difference that exists between history and the law: the ultimate purpose of the latter is the establishment of justice, and of the former, truth—well, not really the establishment of truth, but the reduction of untruth. So far as Hitler goes, a fair

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amount of this has been accomplished during the thirty-six years since his death. We have more information and documentation about Hitler than we ever had about Napoleon. There remain, however, certain elements of his mind and certain periods of his life about which a kind of acceptable consensus is wanting or about which questions may still be raised; and it is to one of these questions that this article is directed.

There are at least four important questions that present and future historians of Hitler may still have to face. I have written about the first three in passing, though not in detail, in books that deal with the Second World War. I shall sum them up very briefly, at the risk of superficiality. The first concerns Hitler's obsession with Jews: my argument is that his obsession was unlike that of many racists, whose anti-Semitism was the result of an overall racial philosophy. Hitler's basic obsession was his Judaeophobia (about which he was frighteningly consistent), and his entire racial ideology (about which he was often inconsistent) was but the superstructure of that. The second concerns Hitler's view of Russia: I have questioned the accepted view, which is that Hitler's overriding aim was to conquer Russia and that his entire strategy of the Second World War was subordinated to this from the beginning. Even though there exists ample evidence for this view, including *Mein Kampf*, my argument is that there is also evidence that he was of two minds about Russia (and especially about Stalin) on several occasions, and that there is surprisingly little evidence about his concern with Russia in 1937 and 1938 when his military and political planning for the domination of Europe and for an eventual war began. The third question concerns the widely accepted idea that, until the very end, Hitler believed he could win the war; yet there is evidence that as early as November 1941 he came to think that the best he could do was to force the gigantic coalition of his enemies apart and to get an acceptable settlement from one side or the other. The fourth concerns the accepted opinion—which had been furthered strenuously by Hitler himself—that his six years in Vienna, from 1907 to 1913, were not only the formative years of his character but the years when his extreme opinions and his ideology crystallized. I think that there is reason to believe that this crystallization occurred not in Vienna but in Munich, surprisingly late, during the thirty-first year of his life—to be exact, just around his thirtieth birthday, which fell on April 30, 1919.

On the night of Hitler's thirtieth birthday, the Munich Soviet Republic collapsed. Regiments of the German army, along with volunteer corps, were marching into Munich where what was to be called a White Terror began. The president of the soviet republic was beaten to death by the soldiers; in the following days and weeks more people were executed than during the months of the Munich soviet rule. Yet the White Terror was popular, whereas the Red Terror had not been. I write "the Munich Soviet Republic" because the authority of that "government" had hardly extended beyond the city of Munich. Of the few soviet episodes in Europe after the First World War, it was the most incompetent. In Munich the German revolution in November 1918 preceded the proclamation of the republic in Berlin; during the following months the regime slid more and more to the Left. The members of its government were Communists, intellectuals, bohemians, many of them Jewish, and on occasion, people who had been certified insane. (Its composition and its ideas were not dissimilar to those of the American crazies of the 1960s, except, of course, that the latter never had the slightest opportunity of even coming close to the exercise of power.) I am compelled to state this because of what was to follow. The city of Munich, traditionally Catholic and more easygoing than the cities of the Prussian north, thereafter became the principal seat of radical rightists and, of course, of the National Socialist party, a condition that continued to prevail even after Hitler's death and the end of the war. Nazism, like Fascism, eventually proved itself to be a modern and populist movement, not merely a reactionary phenomenon; but much of its popular success was owing to the revulsion from communism. Within Europe, Nazism and Fascism were not only anti-Marxist movements but they were also post-Marxist movements, and not merely because Mussolini and Hitler were born after Marx had died.

We do not know where Hitler celebrated his thirtieth birthday, if he celebrated it at all. Of his entire life, the spring months in Munich in 1919 (he had lived in Munich before,

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in 1913–14) are the most obscure. In October 1918 the soldier Hitler was gassed at the front; at the time of the German collapse he was in a hospital in the town of Pasewalk, in Pomerania. In December he made his way back to Munich and rejoined an army unit. We know very little about his activities during the period from February to the first of May 1919, when the Red Terror, though not omnipresent, was murderous and stalked the streets of Munich. There is some evidence that Hitler wore the red armband required of soldiers at the time; in any event, he lay low. What is undoubtable is that his political activities began almost immediately after the collapse of the Reds: he volunteered as a propaganda speaker for the nationalist army; he attended the university lectures of a noted nationalist professor; he began to speak up in public, perhaps as early as June 1919 (the first direct documentary evidence of his public speaking dates from August of that year). Thereafter the evidence multiplies rapidly, and the story is well known. Even before he joined the party from which his own National Socialist German Workers' party would grow, his speeches contained all of the recognizable features of extreme nationalism, Judaeophobia, fanaticism: the very ideas that made him famous were there, to be repeated over and over again.

The question that ought to be raised—and to which, I believe, insufficient attention has been paid hitherto by most historians—is *when* the crystallization of Hitler's ideas occurred; and this is not merely a question of chronological curiosity. Hitler himself said in *Mein Kampf* (and also on many other occasions) that the crystallization of his ideas and of his ideology, his first disillusionment with the Socialists, and, of course, his first realization of the Jewish "menace" took place in Vienna. This has been the opinion accepted by most historians too. There has been much more written about Vienna and the young Hitler than about Munich and Hitler, in books and articles whose authors could draw on the rich *bizarrerie* extant in some of the weird and extreme publications as well as in the "atmosphere" of "decadent" Vienna before 1914. Yet—to mention but one crucial item—we have virtually no evidence of any kind of anti-Semitic utterance (private or public) by Hitler before his thirty-first year. That he may not have liked Jews, and that, inside himself, he was struggling with the question of Jewishness (a point to which I shall have to return at the end of this article) is more than possible. But it seems that he felt no need to express these feelings because they were still inchoate; they had not crystallized into a categorical idea or a powerful obsession. It seems, at least to this historian, that what crystallized these ideas—crystallized them, rather than produced them out of the void—were his experiences, his witnessing of the ridiculous and sordid episode of the Munich Soviet Republic, with its lumpen intellectuals, Jews, et al.; and this is something worth consideration.

The recently published (1980) massive volume, *Hitler: Saemtliche Aufzeichnungen 1905–1924*, a documentary collection of all of Hitler's surviving writings and speeches from 1905 to 1924, sustains this thesis. It contains every letter, every postcard, every note, every draft for a speech, every poem that could be found from Hitler's pen, from his sixteenth year onward. This collection, of what historians used to call "primary sources," is substantial (more than thirteen hundred pages): the items before 1919 amount to more than seventy (items, not pages; they do not include Hitler's drawings and watercolors—he was a better painter than is generally acknowledged). There is a drastic change in both the content and the tone of these personal communications and expressions in 1919, but not before. The impression one receives of the young Hitler is that of a loner, a dreamer, a German idealist—an impression that accords accurately with his war record and with the reminiscences of those who had known him during the war. (It is not widely known that he received his first decoration of the Iron Cross upon the recommendation of a reserve officer of the Jewish faith.) In Hitler's notes and letters and postcards to his friends, whether sent from the front or while he was on leave, the expressions are often childlike, showing a doglike kind of loyalty and deference to his officers and to his country. He wrote this postcard to a friend, in October 1917, from Berlin: "Arrived here only Tuesday. The Arendt family is very kind. I could not have wanted anything better. The city is magnificent. A real cosmopolitan capital *[Weltstadt]*. The traffic even now is enormous. I am walk-

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ing around all day. At last I have the chance to study the museums even more. In sum, everything is fine. *[Es fehlt mir nichts.]*" Even more significant are the poems. (Except for one in a guest book dated 1906 there are none before 1915 or after 1919.) So this is the young Hitler: drawing sketches, painting watercolors, writing poetry in the trenches. The poems are inspirational; their principal theme is patriotic loyalty. Of course Hitler was no Rupert Brooke or Siegfried Sassoon, but the poems are not laughable. They express the fervent sentiments of a German idealist. They are nationalistic, youthful, lonely, and sad. They are not exactly doggerel because of the pathetic touch they carry; they are the expressions of devotion for the fatherland. In spite of the masculine gender of that word, in English as well as in German, it is as if the fatherland were a feminine entity; these are expressions of a single-minded devotion to a great, adored, and now endangered mother.

But here we run into an interesting problem. After the publication of the above-mentioned volume, its editors (Eberhard Jaeckel and Axel Kuhn) were alerted by two letters that drew attention to the questionable genuineness of some of these documents. After a thorough examination the editors concluded that the doubts were justified; they published a notice accordingly in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*. Jaeckel and Kuhn were not to blame: a fair number of the documents had come to them from a private owner who did not wish to have his name published. The questionable documents are a very small portion of the entire collection: sixteen or seventeen items out of a total of nearly seven hundred documents. What they have in common is that most are accompanied by a note from the Reichsleitung, the high directorate of the National Socialist party, and these notes are typed on Reichsleitung stationery. What is interesting is that the questionable documents include some of Hitler's poems from the war and poems and jottings from the early months of the year 1919 in Munich. In the introduction to the Jaeckel-Kuhn volume, these scholars indicated that some of these poems may not have been Hitler's, but were instead copied out by Hitler. Until this publication we did not know that Hitler wrote, or that he copied out, poems. (There is at least one additional falsification: a short poem is included that was written and published well after the war; Hitler could not have copied it.) Six of these questionable items are dated during January and February of 1919. It is unlikely that these insertions in the Party archives were made without Hitler's knowledge. As in *Mein Kampf*, his intention may well have been to show that the crystallization of his ideology occurred earlier than the collapse of the Munich Soviet Republic.

We know that in the first, autobiographical, portion of *Mein Kampf*, Hitler obscured the truth in at least three major instances. One of these involves his father: he wrote of his father with respectful affection; whereas sufficient evidence has accumulated about his childhood and adolescence to suggest that his relationship with his father was not a good one. The second involves his life in Vienna, about which he wrote that he had been condemned by circumstances to live in poverty. The patient research of German historians has since shown us that he had something of a modest income during those years and that much of his poverty was due to his own rather bohemian style of living. The third is the one to which I referred earlier and which is indeed the main subject of this article: his assertion that his ideology had developed and crystallized in Vienna. True, he concluded the first part of *Mein Kampf* with the statement that it was in that hospital in Pomerania, where he experienced the defeat and the collapse of the German empire, that his gas-injured eyes opened: "I now resolved to become a politician." In reality, he did not resolve his doubts, he did not resolve to become a politician, until six months later, after the bloody collapse of the ridiculous Munich Soviet Republic.

There have been, of course, historians who understood the searing experiences of Hitler in that hospital and saw in it a turning point of his interior life. It is interesting to note that the best, and perhaps the most telling, of these descriptions is that by Winston Churchill. In the first volume of his memoirs of the Second World War, Churchill began his chapter on Hitler with a description of Hitler in that hospital: written thirty-four years ago it is still the best, and most penetrating, summary description that we possess. (And we are forever indebted to Churchill not only because of the empyrean quality of his historianship

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but also because, throughout his career, he understood Hitler better than Hitler understood him, which was the key to the great events in the summer of 1940, when Churchill alone stood in Hitler's way to winning the war.) A few years ago an American historian, Rudolph Binion, composed a detailed biographical study of Hitler, which also emphasizes the hospital experiences. Binion's thesis, which is heavily Freudian, is that by 1918 Hitler transferred his extreme devotion for his mother to the motherland Germania—a plausible explanation, even though I am profoundly skeptical of the Freudian categories and the psychological determinism with which the otherwise very knowledgeable Binion interprets Hitler. (For example, there is Binion's thesis of breast fixation, according to which Hitler's hatred for the Jews issued from his recognition that Dr. Bloch, the Jewish doctor who had treated Frau Hitler's breast cancer, had messed up the job by administering drastic iodine treatments that aggravated her illness and caused her great suffering in her last days. Yet Hitler maintained his respect for Dr. Bloch throughout his life and even said that "he was the only decent Jew I knew"; Binion interprets this in the Freudian way, as a case of suppression.) My argument is simply that the crystallization occurred, not in Vienna and not even in Pasewalk, but in Munich—surprisingly late in Hitler's life, around his thirtieth birthday. It was then that he turned from poetry to prose, from ideas to ideology, from self-expression to political oratory, and from a youth into a man.

This is an important point, and not merely because of the Munich experiences. Two writers, not historians, who had deep insight into Hitler's character were Georges Bernanos and George Orwell. Both of them, independent from and unknown to each other, saw in Hitler's face the expression of a tortured, indeed of a humiliated, child. They did not know what we now know: that in all probability Hitler disliked, if not hated, his father, who had humiliated him. We also know the final, or near-final, evidence for the recurrent story to the effect that Hitler's father may have been half-Jewish, the illegitimate son of a young Jewish man and of Hitler's grandmother, who may have served as a maid in Graz. The detailed research of German historians (in this case especially of Werner Maser) well-nigh establishes that this is implausible; it could not have been the case. But does it make much difference? Questions about Hitler's father's ancestry were current in Braunau; if Hitler had no Jewish blood, he may have *thought* that he had, and this is what counted. In any event, his hatred for Jews was so extraordinary and so central to his character that we must at least essay this supposition, for we are inclined to hate in others what we hate in ourselves. What Hitler suppressed, perhaps subconsciously, within himself we do not know, but we have enough evidence from the expressions of his conscious mind. As I wrote in *The Last European War, 1939–1941*, he was a strong man, yet "the fundamental source of his strength was hatred. Compared to the power of his hatreds, even his love for his people—the great purpose of a great national leader—amounted to little. In this he was quite unlike Napoleon." With all of his powerful and still inchoate mind, his hatreds did not coagulate until he was thirty years old. Before that he remained a boy; at thirty he became a man suffused with vengeance. And what is vengeance but the idea of causing suffering in order to heal one's own suffering? The German word for vengeance is *Rache*. There are few uglier sounding guttural words in the German language.

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TEACHING

Garrett Mattingly

ROBERT M. KINGDON

I first heard about Garrett Mattingly in 1949, when I was completing an undergraduate major in history at Oberlin College. I had become excited by the study of history and was sure that I wanted to go on to earn a Ph.D. and become a professional historian. But there were many different kinds of history, and I found them all so interesting that I was having difficulty deciding which to pick as my specialty and where to pursue my advanced study. I wrote to several recent Oberlin graduates then enrolled in doctoral programs at different universities, outlining my interests and asking for advice. I got a particularly long and helpful reply from Robert K. Webb, then completing a course of study in modern British history at Columbia University. (Later he himself was a professor at Columbia, then became editor of the *American Historical Review*, and now teaches history at the University of Maryland.) Webb told me of an exciting new teacher named Mattingly, who had just joined the Columbia department as its specialist in early modern European history. For someone with my background, Webb said, Mattingly would be an ideal person to work with. He was right.

On the Columbia campus, Mattingly was most widely known as a lecturer. He clearly enjoyed lecturing and had developed the dramatic flair that I suppose any fine lecturer possesses. He would pace up and down before the class, occasionally referring to a small card with a few brief notes propped up on the lectern, with his head cocked a bit to one side, increasing an already pronounced resemblance to Edward G. Robinson. He would catch his hearers' attention at the beginning, build it up during the class period, and arrive at an appropriate climax just as the bell rang. The content of his lectures, to be sure, was quite unpredictable. In a course on the expansion of Europe during the early modern period he spent weeks dealing with problems of boat building, explaining how Portuguese borrowings from the Vikings and the Arabs were incorporated into a new type of ship, which made possible the voyages of discovery around Africa and across the Atlantic. In a course on the history of Europe during the Renaissance and Reformation, he spent weeks on the conciliar movement's unsuccessful attempts to reform the Roman Catholic church from within. This very unpredictability, however, heightened interest in his lectures—for me at least. He never condescended to glossing a set of assigned readings or rehashing received generalizations on a given historical period or problem, like many of the other lecturers I heard. He always had something fresh and interesting to say, and he often provoked lively discussion.

For me, as a graduate student in history, instruction in seminars or in personal conferences was, of course, even more important. I found the personal conferences particularly stimulating. Mattingly would pace up and down in his office, suggesting extraordinarily interesting problems for historical investigation, guiding me to provocative models of analogous research and to standard works of reference, conveying the real excitement possible in historical research. The seminars were less exciting. They began well, with a good deal of useful advice presented succinctly. Considerable camaraderie developed among members of these seminars. I still remember with pleasure two magnificent meals we had with the Mattinglys, which helped introduce me to haute cuisine. Mat-

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tingly warned me solemnly that if I persisted in specializing in Calvinism, I would never eat well; he was convinced that there was a negative correlation between Calvinism and good cooking. (He did not appreciate, I was to discover, the extent to which the great Catholic Savoyard cooking tradition has penetrated into Calvinist Geneva.) But as the semester wore on, I got the impression that Mattingly became bored with his seminar. He could not abide a fool, or even a moderately naive beginner, and he could really dress down an unprepared student. That so many students came back for more and even went on to become historians of some distinction provided me with a signal lesson: criticism can be more salutary and effective than encouragement. In a very important sense, however, Mattingly taught his graduate students as much by example as by precept. To appreciate fully his influence as a teacher, therefore, one must consider his accomplishments as a historian.

It had taken Mattingly some time to reach the prestigious chair he then held in Columbia's history department. As a boy he had lived in Washington, D. C., and in Kalamazoo, Michigan. He took all his degrees, both undergraduate and graduate, at Harvard University, where he carved out a brilliant record in both history and literature. He became fascinated with European culture and visited Europe repeatedly—as a traveling fellow from Harvard, as a part-time newspaper correspondent, and in other capacities. He taught English literature briefly at Northwestern University and then moved to New York City. He fell in love with this largest and most vital of American cities, and never again wanted to leave it. The amenities of the suburban life never tempted him. At the height of his career he was invited to Princeton for an extended visit, but found that university town a "well-kept cemetery" and was relieved and happy to return to Manhattan. It took him a while, to be sure, to find employment he enjoyed in New York. For a time he taught history at Long Island University—then chiefly a commuter's college for part-time students—which I once heard him describe as an "academic sewer." During the Second World War he served for a while as a naval officer. After the war he returned to New York to direct a Cooper Union program in adult education, but he had not spent much time in this position when he was called to Columbia.

Mattingly's career developed slowly, partly because of the Great Depression of the 1930s and the Second World War. Yet it was also slowed by his reluctance to publish. His Harvard doctoral dissertation, a massive study of Anglo-Spanish diplomacy in the reign of Henry VIII, ran to several hundred pages and has never been published. Even now it can only be consulted by scholars who get special permission from Harvard. Mattingly had published several highly regarded articles and prepared a massive volume for the English Public Record Office's *Calendar of State Papers*. But he did not come to the general attention of the scholarly community until the publication in 1941 of a popular biography, *Catherine of Aragon*.

That book achieved the rare distinction of becoming both a popular and critical success. A book-club selection and a best-seller, it was greeted with enthusiasm by literary critics because of the skill and humanity with which it was written. It was also acclaimed by professional historians, because of the solid and fresh base upon which it was constructed. Mattingly's reputation was expanded and made secure by two further books, published after I studied with him. *Renaissance Diplomacy*, which was completed in 1955, won particular respect from the professionals. *The Armada*, published in 1959, immediately became a major best-seller both in this country and in England, and before long was translated into half a dozen other languages. During these years, he continued to publish learned articles and technical studies, but his reputation rested, and continues to rest, primarily on his three great books. He was not the sort of historian who is known primarily for his seminal articles, like, for example, Frederick Jackson Turner. Nor was he known primarily for technical studies, embodied in book-length monographs or editions, in the great German tradition of Mommsen. He gained his influence primarily through wide-ranging and popular books, intended as much for the general reader as for the historian.

This combination of appeals, to both the general public and the specialists, is not without precedent in the tradition of historical writing. Indeed it was quite common in the nineteenth century, when historians like Ban-

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croft and Parkman in this country, Macaulay and Trevelyan in England, von Ranke and von Treitschke in Germany, Guizot and Michelet in France all flourished, often becoming extremely successful authors as well as highly respected professional historians. Yet the combination is relatively rare today. The popular hunger for history remains strong, as one can see by checking best-seller lists, but it is generally fed by gifted nonacademics, like Barbara Tuchman and Bruce Catton, Lady Antonia Fraser, and the Duc de Levis Mirepoix. Most professional historians have become increasingly technical and specialized, increasingly likely to write in jargon, increasingly focusing their attention on fellow specialists. Since Mattingly was going against this general tendency in his appeal to both audiences, his achievement was all the more remarkable.

Three ingredients in Mattingly's work, I believe, help to explain the special character of his books and their successful appeal to both scholars and the general public: a pronounced moral concern, a superb technical foundation, and a real mastery of English prose.

Mattingly's moral concern grew from his reactions to the events of his day, from his horror at the moral evil contained in the growth of fascism in Italy and Germany, and from his dismay at the failure of isolationists in America and elsewhere to recognize the dimensions of this evil. His dislike of fascism grew from personal experience. This came home to me sharply when I saw him for the last time, in Florence, in the spring of 1960. We were both on leave from our universities; I was on vacation from research in Switzerland, and he was preparing a set of lectures on the Italian Renaissance that he would deliver in England. I checked into the same Florentine *pensione* in which the Mattinglys were staying, an establishment on the top of a large building, with beautiful views of the Florentine skyline and with excellent food. He was already suffering from the emphysema that helped to kill him a few years later, and so could not do much sight-seeing. But every morning I would ask him for his advice on what to see in the city, and every evening I would tell him what I had done during the day, often making my report in some small cafe in the neighborhood.

One evening we were sitting at the end of the Ponte Santa Trinità, one of the finest bridges spanning the Arno. Mattingly began talking about an incident he had witnessed on that very bridge back in the 1920s. He was at that point a free-lance writer for an English newspaper, sending back periodic reports on Italy. Every morning he used to have his breakfast in the same cafe in which we were then sitting. He had become used to seeing a certain prominent Florentine politician, active in the opposition to the Fascists, walk across that bridge and past the cafe on his way to work every morning. One day, shortly after Mattingly arrived for breakfast, a group of black-shirted Fascist thugs came to the bridge and spoke to a policeman who was directing traffic at the base of the bridge. The policeman walked away and one of the Fascists directed traffic. A few minutes later the politician walked onto the bridge, on his usual route to work. The other Fascists stepped up to him; one of them pulled out a pistol and shot the politician dead. The Fascists then walked away, the policeman returned to his job, and pedestrians called an ambulance, too late to do any good. The next morning the Florentine newspapers reported that the politician had been killed by a person or persons unknown, most probably by an angry rival lover.

Mattingly was horrified by this display of Fascist brutality and deceit. He wrote an article about it for his newspaper, full of graphic detail and moral indignation. He promptly mailed it off to England, but it never arrived. Someone broke into Mattingly's room a few days later and turned everything upside down in a thorough search. Obviously his article was intercepted in the mails.

When Mattingly returned to this country some time afterward, he was distressed that so few Americans knew of the moral evil of fascism or were disturbed by it. Being convinced that Western civilization is essentially a unity, and that this unity must be recognized and maintained, he turned from the teaching and study of English literature to European history. And he determined to devote his life to blasting Americans out of a selfish ethnocentric concern for their own country alone, introducing them to a fuller appreciation of the greater culture of which America is but a part. This he decided to do by teaching and by

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writing, to reach as wide an audience as he could. To use a modern label for what he was doing, he decided to make his work relevant.

Mattingly was far too sophisticated and subtle a man, however, to fail to see the trap into which relevance can draw the historian. He carefully avoided forcing parallels between the past and the present or drawing simple moral lessons from history that were of dubious applicability to the present. The parallels and lessons can be found in his work, but they are never obvious; they are there only by implication; they are there largely because he posed modern questions to his study of the past—questions about how an ideological revolution starts, about how it leads to violence, about how it destroys those who resist it, about how it can ultimately be contained.

This moralism became most striking in Mattingly's work on Machiavelli. He refused to take the more amoral political writing of the Florentine seriously, in particular, *The Prince*. In fact he even published an article in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, in 1958, in which he argued that Machiavelli's *Prince* is best interpreted as a farcical satire, intended to ridicule slyly the princely Medicis to whom it was ostensibly dedicated. That argument irritated or bemused Machiavelli specialists, in this country and in Europe, and it is distinctly possible that Mattingly was trying to pull their legs, since he was quite capable of twitting some of the more serious-minded contemporary Renaissance specialists. But the argument also reflected his conviction that Machiavelli's writing does not present a fair and honest picture of Renaissance politics. He was convinced that the blatant amorality that Machiavelli seems to recommend in *The Prince* was wrong and did not work, either in the Renaissance or now. The falseness of Machiavelli's view of politics, Mattingly felt, could be fully demonstrated by an objective study of how real Renaissance diplomats actually behaved.

Moralism thus led Mattingly to a concern for factual accuracy, and that brought into play his technical background, the second main ingredient in his unique appeal. This was a facet of Mattingly's work with which I did not become familiar quickly, and which took me some time to appreciate. I think anyone approaching his work for the first time would be similarly surprised at its lack of the usual scholarly apparatus, the usual parade of footnotes and appendixes to document fully each fresh fact. As I discovered, the documentation did exist and could have been trotted forth by Mattingly if he wished. It was so extensive, in fact, that it supported every detail in his books. If he mentioned casually that on a certain day and in a certain place the sky was gray and it was raining, he could produce a contemporary letter proving that the weather had been indeed like that. If he claimed that Mary Stuart, just before her head was cut off, disrobed herself and displayed a crimson petticoat, he had first balanced carefully half a dozen accounts of the execution, each describing underclothes of a different color. Then he had judiciously selected crimson as the most probable color because of independent evidence that Mary had red underwear and because, psychologically speaking, Mary's love of self-dramatization would lead her to wear red at her own execution. As Mattingly himself was fond of saying, "History is the most difficult of the belles lettres, for it must be true."

This passion for accuracy had several further implications. It meant that Mattingly worked almost exclusively with primary sources. While he read carefully the secondary literature on every topic he studied, he read it primarily as a guide to sources, which he then examined independently. He did not trust any other historian; he found many of his predecessors dull or misleading. He rarely took time to examine, and then to refute in print, alternative ways developed by others to interpret given phenomena. He went straight to the raw material itself and presented his own interpretation of its significance. This approach, incidentally, made him quite impatient with historians who devote a good deal of their time to historiography, including articles on other historians.

Achieving factual accuracy based on direct use of the sources for Renaissance history is not easy, however, as any specialist can testify. It requires a whole battery of auxiliary tools, and it demands considerable travel. Mattingly pointed this out to us on the very first day of the very first graduate seminar I took with him. He made it quite clear that we should all plan to spend some research time in Europe in order to become fully qualified specialists in the field—even at some finan-

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cial sacrifice. He also emphasized the importance, and the difficulty, of acquiring the necessary competence in languages; we would have to be able to handle as many as six or seven, depending on the ways our interests developed. French and German were essential, because much of the most important secondary literature in the field is in those languages. Latin was important, particularly for the history of ideas, since almost all intellectuals of the period communicated in that language. French and Italian, widely used in business and diplomacy, were needed for the economic and diplomatic history of almost any part of Europe. Further, one must master the language of the sources of the particular geographic area in which one specializes, and that can mean, for example, learning Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, or Swedish. Moreover, the sources for the period are, naturally, in the archaic forms used in, say, the sixteenth century. A modern reader of an original Shakespeare text is likely to find that one in every ten words is unfamiliar either in substance or usage, and that the same problem applies to all sources of the period. Again, in any period there are regional differences not yet smoothed out in the national languages that developed later. One could find considerable differences, for example, in the kinds of French written in Paris, Toulouse, Lyons, and Geneva. Mattingly was clearly at ease in several languages and dialects, and we struggled to follow his example.

There were other problems in source use, however, to which he did not alert us, although he was very familiar with them. The ones to which I became most sensitive were those involved in the use of sixteenth-century manuscripts. Any European-trained historian who wanted to specialize in the period of the Renaissance and Reformation would first take some special courses in diplomatic and paleography, the sciences of interpreting and reading early manuscripts. But practically no American university teaches these skills. There is a growing number of special programs in paleography, which an American graduate student can take before going to Europe, but most of them are so short and so limited that they are only an introduction to the problem. I found that out myself in a most direct and brutal way. I selected a dissertation topic, requiring the use of manuscript sources in Geneva, Switzerland. I worked intensively on printed editions of some of these sources in order to master the particular kind of French in which they were written. Then I went to Geneva, installed myself in the state archives there, and ordered up my first volume of manuscripts. To my horror I discovered I could not read a word. After questioning the European students there, I found they had all studied paleography. One archivist in particular, Paul-F. Geisendorf, specialized in sixteenth-century handwriting. I asked him if I could take his course in paleography. He told me not to bother, but to get to work directly on my topic; he would help me when I got stuck. For the next three months, he and another archivist spent hours with me every week, teaching me how to read sixteenth-century manuscripts. In effect I had a special cram course in French paleography. It was so good that I have had relatively little trouble ever since in reading French handwriting of the period. That of other languages, however, still poses problems. In common with many scholars whose native language is English, I find English handwriting of the sixteenth century harder to read than French or Latin.

A year later, back in the States, I told Mattingly of my severe problems at the beginning of my stay in Europe. He laughed heartily and said that was precisely his experience. After his death, his wife elaborated on this a bit. Soon after their marriage they had gone to the small French town of Annecy, not far from Geneva, where Mattingly intended to go through the manuscript records of a prominent Spanish ambassador. These records were kept in a charming old castle, where the couple expected to have an idyllic time. Yet when Mattingly ordered up his first volume of manuscripts, he found that he couldn't read them. He was in such despair that he was thinking of throwing over the project and going home, but his wife insisted he continue. Bit by bit he learned to read manuscripts of the period, and before long he became a real master of the art, being able to pick up many manuscripts and read them straight off into a dictation machine. This skill made it possible for Mattingly to take on an important technical assignment from the Public Record Office in England, later published as the *Calendar of State Papers, Spanish: Further Supplement to Letters, Despatches, and State Papers, Re-*

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lating to the Negotiations Between England and Spain, Preserved in the Archives at Vienna and Elsewhere, 1513–1542, a huge volume which in sheer size dwarfs all the rest of Mattingly's writings. It is essentially a calendar, or dated chronological list, of all the correspondence, in all the languages, in all the likely continental archives he consulted pertaining to this subject. Such a calendar is an indispensable first step to any kind of really definitive work in diplomatic history, of either a narrative or institutional type.

Having developed these skills, Mattingly could easily have become a full-time technician—which, in fact, is what many of the European historians I admire most have done. My Genevan friends with training in paleography spend most of their time deciphering and editing hitherto unpublished manuscripts, like the Registers of the Geneva Company of Pastors, or the correspondence of Theodore Beza, or the manuscript sermons of John Calvin. Similar teams of scholars in other cities, like Zurich, are engaged in similar tasks. And goodness knows there are enough manuscripts to keep several teams of experts busy on the paleography of sixteenth-century diplomatic correspondence. Mattingly pointed this out himself, particularly in the chapters of his *Renaissance Diplomacy* devoted to the Italian origins of modern diplomatic institutions, above all, the resident embassy. The Italian manuscripts upon which his argument depended are voluminous but disorganized. Most Italian archives have never even arranged them in chronological order. Until this is done, the general historian can only sample, and that is what Mattingly did. It is quite possible that later historians, once the records have all been properly arranged and analyzed, will discover that the first resident ambassador in history did not serve the Gonzaga princes of Mantua in northern Italy before 1341, as Mattingly provisionally claims, but rather worked in a different area at an earlier time. No one can be sure until the necessary archival work is done.

It is difficult for any American, who necessarily spends much of his life at some distance from the European archives, to become a full-time paleographer. Really intensive and sustained work of this sort is probably best left to the scholars who live near the records. In any event, Mattingly decided he did not want to remain primarily a paleographer. Nor did he want to devote all his time to other technical studies of a sort that he had demonstrated he could handle. Upon the factual base supplied to him by these technical sciences he wanted to build a history that would be of broad interest. And to do this he deployed yet other skills.

This brings me to the third and most obvious ingredient in Mattingly's success: his mastery of English prose. Mattingly had an enormous respect for the English language and for the ways in which it could be used to communicate. He tried continually to improve his own use of the language, and everything he ever wrote was polished and repolished again and again, sometimes with the help of other prominent writers. Even in his leisure time he tried to improve his feeling for language by limiting his reading and conversation. He loved detective stories, but he would refuse to finish one that was badly written. Most of his best personal friends in New York were writers, not scholars. In our graduate seminars, many of his most searching questions had to do with problems of expression and usage.

To me this concern for precise and graceful expression is most clearly revealed in Mattingly's real masterwork, *Renaissance Diplomacy*; I think it is one of the most elegant books ever written. It is broken up into four distinct yet closely related stages in the development of diplomatic institutions: late medieval; Italian Renaissance; sixteenth century, as complicated by the Reformation; and early modern, as it emerged from the wars of religion. In each stage Mattingly describes the typical diplomatic institutions and practices of the period, and the ideological assumptions underlying them. Each stage carries illustrations from a rare but utterly appropriate manual for practicing diplomats of that period and milieu. This book was published at a time when the cold-war diplomatic conflicts between the Communist world and the West were at their height. Parts of it, particularly the section on Reformation diplomacy, held obvious implications for the contemporary scene, and its hopeful ending provided a ground for optimism. But these implications were never developed by Mattingly and are left to be worked out by interested readers. All that one finds in the book itself is an

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exceedingly polished and thoughtful analysis of the fundamental changes in diplomacy during the European Renaissance.

It would be difficult and probably futile for me to go much further in analyzing Mattingly's skill as a writer. In this domain, above all others, it is pointless to talk about him, and essential to read him.

Like any scholar, like any man, Mattingly had his limitations. His interests in history may seem somewhat old-fashioned to many modern historians. His starting point was diplomatic history, and he moved from that to institutional history and military (or, more properly, naval) history. Many modern professional historians find these varieties of history less than interesting, if not downright stale and inferior in intellectual challenge.

Mattingly was very aware of certain other types of history. He saw the value and importance of economic history, but he did not want to get into it himself. He liked the history of ideas and made valuable contributions to the history of political thought, although he was irritated by the label "intellectual history." Several times I heard him ask, "And what is *nonintellectual history*?" He did not fully appreciate, however, the great excitement that has been generated over the last thirty years by social history, particularly as it has been worked out by the French school of the *Annales*. He was one of the first Americans to review Fernand Braudel's seminal study, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, for the *American Historical Review*, in 1950. He fully appreciated Braudel's teacher, Lucien Febvre, and had read with care all the work of this master of modern French historiography. But he did not fully grasp the advance upon Febvre that was being scored by his pupil Braudel. Much of Mattingly's review was devoted to pointing out the weaknesses in the third section of Braudel's large study, the section devoted to political analysis and narrative. This is, admittedly, the weak part of that book. Mattingly did find fresh and stimulating the earlier two parts of the Braudel book, devoted to the geographic and social matrix in which the Mediterranean world lived at that time and to the economic substructure for that society. But he did not see just how stimulating it would prove to be, how it would revitalize an entire school of French historical studies and have a decisive influence on the worldwide community of historical scholars.

In a sense, for the generation of scholars who went to graduate school when I did, Braudel represented the wave of the future. Mattingly was a voice from the past. In our enthusiasm to embrace the future, however, we should not ignore the past. The moral concern, the technical honesty, and the careful expression for which Garrett Mattingly stood are values that we might well treasure still. There are few men in any generation who have so much to say that is worthwhile. There are fewer still who can say it so well.

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John Morley

WILLIAM HALEY

In my faraway boyhood days before the First World War, photography, whether as a hobby or a business, was largely a do-it-yourself affair. You had not only to take the picture but also to develop the negative and make the prints. The crucial chemical for the preservation of what you had captured through your lens was the hypo. Let the hypo bath be too weak, or the time you immersed your results in it too short, then the images would fade, quickly or slowly, the final state being oblivion.

So it is with public reputations, particularly those of men and women who give their lives to politics and the world of affairs. The trouble is that in their cases there is no single hypo to act as a fixative. It can be almost irrelevant to the man's life work—to his credit or discredit. A hundred years ago no English politician held greater promise than Sir Charles Dilke, who at one point was confidently spoken of as a future prime minister and four years later was overwhelmed by a divorce case. Ask almost anyone knowledgeable in England today to name any one act that made Dilke famous in his seventeen years in the House of Commons before his catastrophe, or any detail of the notable record of public service he gave in the twenty-six years afterward, and, if the man is of the present generation, he will merely recall that there was some sort of a scandal. If he is of the older generation, he is likely to mutter vaguely about "three in a bed."

Winston Churchill's father was a formidable politician. But if he is quoted at all today, it is as the chancellor of the exchequer who referred to decimals as "those damned dots." That he "forgot Goschen" (thinking Lord Salisbury, the prime minister, would not accept his resignation and would give way to his demands because there was no one to replace him) might come from only a few old journalists.

Journalists have found their hypo in odd mixtures. Famous men as far apart as Gladstone and George Meredith hailed Frederick Greenwood as one of the greatest editors of his day. Nothing, however, in his journalism has kept his name alive. His memory still has a tenuous hold on us solely because it was he who suggested to Disraeli that the British government should buy the khedive's shares in the Suez Canal. Of the hundreds of thousands of words C. P. Scott wrote during his nearly sixty years as editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, only six are now remembered: "Comment is free; facts are sacred"—not an original idea, and indeed rather trite. John Morley, Greenwood's successor in the chair of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, is now often remembered as the editor who insisted on spelling God with a small *g*.

John Morley—Viscount Morley of Blackburn—is one of the puzzles of British political and literary life in the last two centuries. The son of a doctor in Blackburn, a rather grim town in the northern county of Lancashire, he was prominent in both these worlds through a long lifetime. The friend of John Stuart Mill, George Meredith, Thomas Huxley, Leslie Stephen, and George Eliot; the editor who made the *Fortnightly Review* a brilliant leader of thought; author of books on Cromwell, Burke, Rousseau, Voltaire, Gladstone, Diderot, and Cobden; colleague of Joseph

SIR WILLIAM HALEY was director-general of the British Broadcasting Corporation from 1944 to 1952 and editor of *The Times* (London) from 1952 to 1966.

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Chamberlain, a cabinet minister under Gladstone, Campbell-Bannerman, and Asquith—it seemed natural that when in 1902 Edward VII created the most exclusive Order of Merit (limited to twenty-four members), John Morley should be on the first list.

A. G. Gardiner, editor of the *Daily News* for eighteen years, was the best writer of political character studies in Edwardian days. When his *Prophets, Priests, and Kings*, the first of four memorable volumes, all still worth reading by students of English politics and English society in the first quarter of this century, was published in 1908, it would have been incomplete without John Morley. Gardiner, no hero worshipper, pitched his praise of Morley high. He did not hesitate to include "immortals" in his parallels:

> Lord Morley is the only "double first" of his time. He is perhaps the only double first since Burke. Other men have won distinction in more than one field. Canning wrote verse. Disraeli wrote novels. Macaulay was an orator and a historian as well as a statesman. Gladstone discussed Homer as vehemently as he discussed Home Rule. Lord Rosebery has trifled as piquantly with letters as he has with politics. Mr. Balfour has spun cobwebs in covers as well as across the floor of the House. But of none of these can it be said that he was in the front rank alike of literature and of statesmanship. It may, with reserve, be said of Lord Morley.

Yet by the time Morley died in 1923 the reserve had fermented. Born in 1838 he had certainly been an "eminent Victorian." But not by Lytton Strachey's standards. And when what is still a key book, *The Great Victorians*, was published in 1932, none of the forty contributors, who included Rebecca West, G. K. Chesterton, J. L. Hammond, Harold Nicolson, Herbert Read, and Harold Laski, had Morley assigned as a subject. Nor did Morley receive more than incidental mention by G. M. Young in his study of Victorian England, *Portrait of an Age*. Efforts—there have not been many—to revive interest in Morley have failed. In Morley's case John Dyer's lines from "Grongar Hill,"

> A little Rule, a little Sway
> A Sunbeam in a Winter's Day
> Is all the Proud and Mighty have
> Between the Cradle and the Grave,

need the addition of the words "and Beyond."

What went wrong? There is no short answer. But we can learn something of English history and English habits of thought by examining Morley's career in literature and in politics more closely. Politics being the more finite and the more enclosed of the two worlds, I will take that first.

Morley entered the House of Commons in 1883. He was forty-four. He had first stood for Parliament as a Liberal fourteen years earlier, coming at the bottom of the poll. In the interim he had edited the *Fortnightly Review* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* and had given strongly radical characters to both. More important, he had come to know, and then to associate with, Joseph Chamberlain. They joined forces to oppose the Forster Education Bill of 1870 on denominational and agnostic grounds. Dilke joined them, and together they became a formidable combination. They not only attacked Disraeli but on occasion were also critical of Mr. Gladstone. It was strange that the chapelman and the agnostic should have become not only politically allied but also friendly. Less than three years after Morley had entered the House of Commons, Gladstone appointed him Irish Secretary.

Mr. Gladstone was approaching—if he had not already reached—the point after which Ireland was to dominate his political life. While prime ministers are ipso facto supposed, and popularly believed, to control the whole of their governments' policies, it is not uncommon for them, particularly in their later years in office, to concentrate on some single, overriding issue, to which they subordinate all else. With Gladstone it was Ireland. (When Winston Churchill came back for his second term in 1951, it was Russia's possession of the atom bomb.) The government was leaderless on crucial domestic issues. Even though it is generally the greatest of prime ministers who regress from being polymathic leaders to being obsessive statesmen, the results are to the detriment of their country. Neither nations nor politicians can prosper on one issue alone; when that issue stays unresolved for generations the outcome can be disastrous for both.

It was Morley's misfortune to be concerned as minister with what were then—and one of them still is—the most intractable problems of British politics. Having had the responsibility of Ireland under Gladstone's last two administrations, and then under Rosebery's, he was

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given India when Campbell-Bannerman came to power in 1905. He held the India Office for five years.

Both Ireland and India have proved to be the graves of political reputations. Morley was little more than Gladstone's henchman in Ireland. What he accomplished there is no longer known, except by specialist students of Anglo-Irish history. It amounted to nothing decisive. Ironically, the two chief Secretaries for Ireland who are best remembered are Lord Frederick Cavendish, who was murdered in Phoenix Park, Dublin, within forty-eight hours of arriving to take up his post, and Augustine Birrell, whose political career was ended by the Easter rising in Dublin in 1916—he had been too easygoing a minister to foresee trouble. The political work of neither man deserves a place in history, and the survival of their names in politics rests solely on their tragedies. (It may be said in passing that *The Diary of Lady Frederick Cavendish*, published in two volumes in 1927, is one of the most enchanting, gay, then sad, and finally inspiring pictures of one strand of English society in the Victorian age.)

India was also no fertile ground for Morley's lasting fame. As always, he labored conscientiously; but finally, to relieve the strain, he went to the House of Lords in 1908 at his own request. The Morley-Minto reforms he helped institute have long since lost any relevance; and many years before India became independent in 1947, the events concerning it during the century's first decade had been forgotten. The praise for 1947 must go, not to the much publicized, flamboyant figures, but to the quiet, decisive, best of all of Britain's postwar prime ministers, Clement Attlee.

Holding the two offices in Ireland and India were the major events of Morley's life in politics. He had acquired the popular title of "Honest John" long before undertaking either of them. He had become a welcomed Liberal orator on platforms throughout the country, but not a single speech of his is now remembered. Augustine Birrell, his friend and colleague, said his speeches "savoured of the Academy and though often effective were never intensely interesting." That he had no oratorical frills endeared him to the multitude. What he said, and the clarity and vigor with which he said it, seemed to offer a brave new world. George Goschen called him "the Saint Juste of our Revolution." Compared with the revolution accomplished by Attlee between 1945 and 1950, it is now almost indiscernible.

An anti-imperialist, Morley opposed the Boer War. In 1914 he led the antiwar section of the cabinet; and when war was declared, he resigned and left politics altogether. His last office had been Lord Privy Seal. He has been given little credit in the first case, none in the second. For a generation the problem of South Africa was believed to have been solved by the magnanimity of Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman after the war was over. In the case of the First World War, the resignations of John Morley and John Burns from the cabinet were swept into insignificance by the holocaust that followed. Morley's *Memorandum on Resignation*, which was published in 1928, five years after his death, fell flat. It made no impact on a generation with whom any vestige of interest in the causes of the war had been killed by the increasing burdens of its consequences. Those who did read it found it one of the least impressive of his writings. To crown the succession of ironies of Morley's political fame, his last public appearance was in December 1921, when the treaty of peace with Ireland was hailed as having saved both nations from irreparable disaster.

In recent years mild interest in Morley has been awakened. It has been little to his benefit. The diaries of Charles Hobhouse, published five years ago under the title *Inside Asquith's Cabinet*—cabinet ministers did keep diaries in those days—record Hobhouse as having found Morley disagreeable. Hobhouse had been warned to be careful in any dealings he had with Morley, who was described as "vain, capricious, and peevish." Hobhouse found him "never an easy Cabinet member." Rosebery called Morley "a shy horse to go up to in the stable." Birrell said he was "never a very accommodating bit of furniture" when it came to cabinet making. Once in cabinet he frequently threatened to resign. Whether he did so over the Parnell divorce scandal is, so far as I know, not certain. According to Hobhouse he did so threaten in 1909 in protest against Lloyd George's proposals to cut short the debate on the finance bill; over the House of Lords' reform proposals in 1910; and a second time in the same year—but when Asquith made no move to

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persuade him to stay, he withdrew his resignation.

In 1912 Hobhouse made a most interesting survey of the characters of his cabinet colleagues—Grey: "clear, narrow, obstinate"; Haldane: "dangerous, subtle"; Churchill: "ill-mannered, boastful." Allowing for his general uncharitableness, his acknowledgment of Morley's influence is all the more impressive:

> Morley is useful in keeping us to constitutional precedents, and as both George and Churchill have some veneration for him, he acts as a useful check on them. He threatens resignation twice a week, and will never go until the Government does.

But when it came to the greatest issue of all, Morley did not waver in August 1914.

From others there have been glimpses of a politically envious, jealous Morley: sulking when he was not made chancellor of the exchequer or foreign secretary, for neither of which posts he had any qualifications or aptitude. The same small blemishes have been revealed in many famous men. In Morley's case the disclosures came late. They were of no consequence to a generation for whom his political life no longer held the interest to persuade them to resurrect and revalue him. It may be asked why is it worth doing so now. We must turn to the other half of Morley's "failed double first" for the answer.

Morley straddled the Victorian literary world as editor, as critic, and as author. His work as a daily journalist needs little recalling today. Whatever view one takes of it, it cannot affect his fame. His editorship of the *Pall Mall Gazette* was conducted at a time when Liberal editors were much more personally involved with the leading men of the party they supported than would be acceptable today. Morley, for all his much vaunted independence, was no exception. His journalism was a series of stepping-stones to his political career. Newspaper editors are not, in any case, the stuff out of which immortality is made. Few are remembered by the generation that follows their deaths. A handful have become legends: Thomas Barnes of *The Times*, William Allen White of the Emporia *Gazette*, Charles Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*, and in these postwar years Beuve-Mèry of *Le Monde*. Others can be added, but taken all in all, they are not an impressive or imperishable line.

The *Fortnightly Review* was on a different plane. Morley edited it for fifteen years (1867–1882). It was there he commanded serious attention, bringing with him a reputation among a wide cross section of Victorian culture and affairs. He added science. Among his friends and coadjutors were John Stuart Mill, George Eliot, Cotter Morison, Thomas Huxley, George Meredith, Leslie Stephen, Frederic Harrison, and Matthew Arnold. The son of a father who had carried small volumes of Virgil and Racine while on his daily medical rounds, Morley himself could find relief in Lucretius. He brought to the *Fortnightly* a vast arsenal of literary, historical, and classical reading to back his own contributions. He did a nice job of demolishing William E. Lecky. He published Huxley's *On the Physical Basis of Life*, which caused what was for him the greatest of all stirs. In his *Recollections* forty years later, Morley paraphrased from A. W. Benn's *History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century*:

> The latest historian of English rationalism in the nineteenth century says that if any one year can be specified as that in which it reached its most intense expression, 1877 is the date. Nearly every number of the *Fortnightly*, he adds, during the second half of that year contained an attack by some powerful writer, either on theology as a whole, or on some generally accepted article of theological belief.

As was perhaps natural in an agnostic, Morley's positions on some of these issues were not precise. By the time he reached his editorial prime, Evangelicalism was dead. Augustine Birrell, remarking that "Mr. Gladstone knew nothing, except historically and that imperfectly, of Nonconformists," added that "John Morley, a philosophical Agnostic who had been brought up and baptized in the Church of England, knew as little." In 1874 came Mill's *Three Essays on Religion* to confuse issues further. And, constantly hovering, there was the incubus of Comte.

There is little point today in trying to establish who among the outstanding Victorians were true Comtists. They could not agree even among themselves. Frederic Harrison, now one of the most neglected of Victorians and one who accepted Comtism as a religion, split with Richard Congreve, who claimed

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to be its spiritual head in England. What is certain, and surprising, is the attraction Comte's theories and teaching had for Mill and some of his contemporaries. Today whatever "religion of humanity" there is has a different look. One wonders how anyone could ever have taken Comte's philosophy and system and science seriously. Morley was never a Comtist, but he regarded Comte as "now generally admitted to have been the most eminent and important of that interesting group of thinkers whom the overthrow of the old institutions in France turned towards social speculation." One suspects Morley's interest was aroused by Comte's acceptance of Condorcet as his "philosophic father." Having been as fair to Comte as any friend of Mill could be, Morley concluded that "after performing a great and real service to thought, Comte almost sacrificed his claims to gratitude by the invention of a system that, as such, and independently of detached suggestions, is markedly retrograde." Comtism is a mausoleum of lost reputations. In fairness to Morley, his reservations must be stressed. His criticism was always greater than Mill's.

Of all Morley's contemporaries none had so great an influence on him as John Stuart Mill. Morley classed Mill and Meredith as his two earliest friends and teachers and was staunch to both of them to their deaths. Whenever he wrote about Mill his prose took on a warmth that belied his general air of austerity and restraint. It attracts us to Morley himself. Much of Morley's prose is detached and cerebral, but he had another side as well. He was cozy with Birrell, welcomed Herbert Spencer—where is he now?—as "head of the Agnostic school on its philosophic and systematic side," and regarded Leslie Stephen, another agnostic, as a comrade. But no one of these commanded the reverence or stirred the affection he gave to Mill. Morley now lives primarily in that great shade. Unfortunately it is not sufficient to transfer interest to Morley himself. While Boswell had gifts that enabled him to move out of the shadow of Dr. Johnson, Morley cannot stand in his own light when associated with Mill or Gladstone.

One other editorship of Morley's must be mentioned. It had enduring results, though he refers to it only briefly in his *Recollections*. Macmillan invited him to edit a series of volumes on *English Men of Letters*. At once he decided *Doctor Johnson* must be the first volume. He had no doubt that Leslie Stephen should write it. With one or two aberrations the series is now a splendid line of over seventy volumes. Although Morley visited America twice, in 1867 and in 1904, and met Emerson, Whitman, and Charles Sumner, he included no Americans. The editor of a later generation brought in Melville, Poe, and Whitman. Some years ago the possibility of a complete re-edition was discussed. It was deemed an impossible undertaking. Posterity has not been badly served by Morley's assembly; his fathering of the series should be more widely known.

Even if it were, it would not restore to Morley the high position he had in his lifetime. No firsts are won by indirect means. Morley must stand or fall according to the judgment on his own writings. The test is naturally applied to his collected works, published in a handsome deluxe fifteen-volume edition, with quality paper, large type, and leather bindings. All were published in 1921, while Morley was still alive. The first thing that strikes one is what it does not contain. The *Life of Gladstone*, generally regarded as his major work, was excluded; it might be held that the three solid tomes, later published as two, would have weighed down the rest. But it is difficult to understand why his *Life of Richard Cobden* suffered the same fate. F. W. Hirst, who in 1927 produced the *Early Life and Letters of John Morley*, deemed it one of the best of Morley's writings and said, "It holds its place among English political biographies." Morley's *Edmund Burke*, *Walpole*, and *Oliver Cromwell*—none of them so successful—are included.

This corpus of political biographies comprises no certain passport to fame. *Life of Gladstone* was a best-seller when it appeared in 1903. It sold 130,000 sets up to the outbreak of the First World War. That watershed in history reduced it to an act of piety. With the exception of Ireland, the political struggles of the nineteenth century no longer had relevance. Labor had entered party politics. A new society was forming. The British people were facing problems of a magnitude that Gladstone would have thought incredible. Morley's three heavy tombstones, even the two, were more than the new generation was willing to read. Something more compact was

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needed. Not without reason. Gladstone's verbosity in speech, contrasted with the maddening laconism of the entries in his *Diaries*, plus the fact that it takes genius to make self-righteousness readable, made Morley's work a deadweight once it was no longer topical. In 1954 Sir Philip Magnus's single volume was welcomed. And for those who wanted the essence of Gladstone rather than his career, there was J. L. Hammond's splendid study *Gladstone and the Irish Nation*.

Strangely, the six volumes of Monypenny and Buckle's *Life of Disraeli* have not the same daunting air. They do not often invite us to take them from their shelf. But they do not reproach. The Bradenham edition of the novels is alongside to remind us that Disraeli had plenty of wit and grace. And Disraeli was anything but self-righteous.

A greater figure than either of these two Victorian political gladiators was the Protector. In a House of Commons debate in June 1895 on the question of a statue of Cromwell, Morley declared that he looked upon him as the greatest of Englishmen. Five years later he published his *Oliver Cromwell*. It was an honest and brave attempt to unravel that complicated leader. Morley wrote with more feeling than he usually did when dealing with historical figures. His summing-up was Olympian:

> In our own half-century now closing, alike in Western Europe and across the Atlantic, the torch of war has been lighted rather for Unity of race or state, than for Liberty. Cromwell struck for both. It was his armed right hand that crushed the absolutist pretensions alike of crown and mitre, and then forced the three kingdoms into the mould of a single state. It was at those decisive moments when the trembling balance hung on fortune in the battlefield, that the unconquerable captain turned the scale. After we have discussed all the minor aspects of his special policies on this occasion or the other, after we have scanned all the secondary features of his rule, this is still what in a single sentence defines the true place of Cromwell in our history.

Unfortunately for Morley, his Cromwell has been squeezed out between Thomas Carlyle's four volumes and C. H. Firth's single one. Morley knew what the fate of his book would be. He confessed that it was only after he was committed to his enterprise that he discovered Firth and Gardiner were swimming in the same stream. His bowing out to both was frank and generous.

Morley wrote two studies of Edmund Burke, one of them for the English Men of Letters series. Neither is entirely satisfactory. He admitted his early debt to Burke in his *Recollections*. Yet Burke defeated him as he has everyone else. There are times when one wonders if Burke is another case of "the Emperor's clothes." At other times he seems the Samuel Taylor Coleridge of politics.

The other volumes in the collected works that must be put forward for Morley's literary first are mainly on French subjects: *Rousseau*, *Voltaire*, *Diderot and the Encyclopaedists*. There are essays ranging from Carlyle to Machiavelli, and from Robespierre to Emerson—all of them readable, but hardly memorable. But long or short they all convey the feeling of Morley's *gravitas*.

There remains *On Compromise*. Dealing with the acceptable limits of conformity and dissent in politics and religion, it is the most closely argued of all Morley's volumes. It has not lost its relevance. Modern practices and new forms of disseminating information, propaganda, and debate have given it added point. But it stands in the shadow of Mill's *On Liberty*. On the other side there is Sir James Fitzjames Stephen's *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*. Morley and Stephen jousted over Mill; reason is on Morley's side. Emotionally one is swept away by Stephen's magnificent closing paragraphs. They have tones of Sir Thomas Browne's "organ of the English language with all the stops pulled out"; the defiant passages of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony could provide incidental music. Morley never wrote anything as vehement as these words of Stephen. The contrast is heightened by the fact that Stephen shows himself to be also an agnostic of a kind.

On my first reading of *On Compromise* in youth, the most precious thing I took from it was Archbishop Whately's aphorism, "It makes all the difference in the world whether we put Truth in the first place or in the second place." That admonition has been a lifelong companion. It encapsulates Morley's argument. Morley put it on his title page. It was the motto he could put on the arms of his writings as a whole. One wishes that just as succeeding editions of Bagehot's *The English Constitution* have led to reappraisals of Bage-

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hot's ideas, *On Compromise* could be revivified for each generation in the same way. Someday it might prove the hypo for the rest.

It can be objected that one does not examine candidates for fame feature by feature. The spirit of the man or woman must be seen in its totality. Morley was not a man for all seasons. He has to be judged against the background of his age and on how his qualities would have been rated in any age. Morley himself summed up the requirements in the introduction to his *Recollections*:

> A personal story is soon told. In political records its main interest must lie in the points at which it chances to touch weightier things besides the familiar matters of today. What arms did your man carry in the serried conflicts of his time? Did he let them rust, and trust for safety to his shield? What pace did he strive to keep with the revolving forces of his age? Did unnoticed tributaries force the channels of his life, at this point or that, to run off into barren sands? *Diu multumque vixi.* It has been my fortune to write some pages that found and affected their share of readers; to know and work on close terms with many men wonderfully well worth knowing; to hold responsible offices in the State; to say things in popular assemblages that made a difference.

The privileges are balanced against the responsibilities. Both were common to many of Morley's contemporaries. For most the balance will come down on the right side. But posterity is a stern judge in the long run. The competition is great.

The Victorian age was a time of giants: Carlyle, Peel, Palmerston, Macaulay, Mill, Disraeli, Cobden, Tennyson, Dickens, Meredith, Thackeray, Huxley, Matthew Arnold, George Eliot, Samuel Butler, Thomas Hardy. Has posterity done Morley an injustice by not admitting him to that company? For years his private life was dealt with unfairly. There were uncharitable gossip and rumors. It was left to J. W. Robertson Scott, a good, if garrulous, newspaper historian, to reveal thirty years ago that Morley's outward reserve, which led uncharitable critics to hint darkly, was due to domestic tragedy, stoically and silently borne.

It may seem strange to speak of ill fortune when talking about a man who, without privilege, gained place and power by his merits alone. Yet Morley, as I have tried to show, did suffer mischances, sometimes mistimings. More of his pettiness has been revealed than of his noble qualities. Acolyte to Mill, the "saint of Rationalism," he could not become the "saint of Agnosticism." Uncertainty can have no saints. Any hope of political greatness foundered in the swamps of Ireland, of India, and of 1914. His literary career was distinguished, his works impressive. None of them, however, has the vital touch of magic. Maybe the day will come when new dangers and new doubts will force a reassessment. The chance, though, is slim. There will always be the wounding blow given by Campbell-Bannerman. He dubbed Morley "Priscilla."

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Books

Upstairs Downstairs in the Sixteenth Century

HUGH TREVOR-ROPER

THE LISLE LETTERS. *6 volumes. Edited by Muriel St. Clare Byrne. University of Chicago Press. $300.00 the set.*

The English historian G. M. Young once wrote that the historian should read the documents of an age until he could hear the people speak. That was all very well for the Victorian age of which he wrote, but how can we penetrate, in that depth, those earlier periods for which private correspondence hardly exists? Fifteenth-century England seems to us infinitely remote, its anarchy almost unimaginable, until we read the Paston Letters and see the daily problems of a Norfolk family during the Wars of the Roses. Publicly, an age may be well documented; but it is by its private character, by the attempts of individuals to lead conventional lives even in the midst of revolution, that we sense its reality and seem, while we read, to share its life.

The public character of the reign of Henry VIII is well documented. That too was an age of revolution. Not anarchy, as in the fifteenth century, but controlled revolution, revolution from above. The seven-year period from 1533 to 1540—the seven years of Thomas Cromwell—witnessed the breach with Rome, the dissolution of the monasteries, the Pilgrimage of Grace, the creation of a new state church and a new "despotic" state. Politically, the process was continuous, legalized in regular institutions, but it was accompanied, and indeed driven forward, by a reign of terror. All who opposed or obstructed it, even involuntarily, were ruthlessly eliminated: More and Fisher, Anne Boleyn, the Carthusians, the Pilgrim leaders, the Pole family, finally Cromwell himself; and even after him the process would go on, though more untidily: "Cromwell's revolution" in government had the true character of a revolution: it devoured its children.

Are there any documents which reveal the private character of this hectic period as the Paston Letters revealed that of Henry VI? There are, and thanks to a lifetime of devoted study, some two-thirds of them have now been edited and presented in readable form, with a copious running commentary, by Miss Muriel St. Clare Byrne, and published in six ample volumes, beautifully printed, by the University of Chicago Press. They are the Lisle letters, and they cover exactly those seven years in which Thomas Cromwell both ruled and transformed England in the name, and at the mercy, of Henry VIII.

The Lisle Letters are not a new discovery. They were calendared long ago, in the great nineteenth-century collection, *Letters and Papers of Henry VIII*, begun by John Brewer and continued by James Gairdner (who also edited *The Paston Letters*). Historians have always used them, picking out what they wanted, but it was left to Miss Byrne to see that they had a coherent unity, which was lost by such piecemeal use: that they could be used, not merely incidentally and individually to illustrate the course of politics, but collectively in their own right, to bring back to life the self-contained human world which had created them—the world of a promi-

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nent but essentially unpolitical family which chance had involved (and in the end nearly ruined) in this formidable Cromwellian revolution.

Who was Lord Lisle? He was the illegitimate son, by the daughter of a Hampshire gentleman, of King Edward IV. As such, he was a Plantagenet, the only male survivor, after 1485, of the White Rose dynasty in the Wars of the Roses; but his illegitimacy, which debarred him from the throne, made him politically harmless. His own character, like that of his father, was agreeable and easygoing, and Henry VII, having married Lisle's legitimate half-sister in order to appropriate his Yorkist claims, could afford to be indulgent to this unambitious and inoffensive kinsman. Henry VIII continued the indulgence. Under him, Lisle became keeper of the royal forests of Clarendon and Bere, Privy Councillor, and Vice-Admiral of England. Finally, in 1533 when he was about seventy (if we accept Miss Byrne's calculations, which seem here to be questionable), he was appointed the King's Deputy, or Governor, of Calais, the last relic of English rule in France. His predecessor had been Lord Berners, the translator of Froissart. Lisle took over his official residence, the old Staple Inn, and his private furniture and plate. With him went his second wife, Honor.

Lisle's first wife, by whom he had three daughters, had been a Grey, baroness Lisle in her own right (hence his own choice of title), widow of Edmund Dudley, the minister of Henry VII and first victim of Henry VIII. He was thus stepfather of John Dudley, afterward duke of Northumberland, who would be executed for seeking to place his family on the throne. Through her, he acquired land in ten counties. His second wife was a Grenville, of a famous and dynamic Cornish family. She too had been married before, to a West Country gentleman of very ancient family, Sir John Basset, and her Basset children were still young when she went to Calais. She was then in her early forties and still hoped to bear a male heir to the name of Plantagenet; but in this she would be disappointed. Her continuing ambitions were to preserve and enlarge the ample Basset estates in Devon and Cornwall and to ensure the worldly success of her Basset children.

Lisle's government of Calais has generally been dismissed as lax and inefficient. This view was expressed categorically by the American historian R. B. Merriman, the biographer of Cromwell, and has been repeated since. It irritates Miss Byrne, who protests—perhaps too much—against this "Merriman myth." Lisle's correspondence does not suggest a forceful personality, but let us concede that he was a conscientious official, worried by his duties and his debts—he was always short of cash, and lived, as was expected of him, far beyond his means—and that the compliments which he received from Henry and from Cromwell were genuine. Certainly everyone agreed that he was "gentle": "the gentlest heart living," said the king; "of a most gentle nature," wrote the Protestant martyrologist John Foxe. Lady Lisle was not gentle. Some thought her a termagant, others a busybody, others (like Foxe) a popish bigot. She knew what she wanted and was determined to get it. She knew all the details of her own estates and of her husband's business, which she did not hesitate to mind. Those who wanted something from the Lord Deputy either enlisted her aid or, if she were unwilling, got at him alone.

Lisle's duties at Calais were to ensure the defense and provision of the town, to see that the soldiers' wages were paid, and—most difficult of all—to keep the peace among the English officials, all of whom were on the make and some of whose families had been entrenched there for generations. In time of war between its neighbors, the king of France and the emperor, he had to preserve the neutrality of Calais, and of course he had to entertain visiting grandees on their way to or from England: the Admiral of France, for instance, on his embassy in 1534, or the Elector Palatine, coming to fix the Cleves marriage in 1539. To assist him in these tasks he had a council of officials and a retinue, whose officers were known as "Spears." Commissions as Spears were highly valued—they provided the basis for profitable sidelines—and local officials coveted them for their sons. So did courtiers in England. This competition was not the least of Lisle's worries.

Theoretically such commissions were in the gift of the Lord Deputy, but in fact well-placed young men, with powerful backing, were always seeking to jump the queue. Lisle's greatest trouble came from Sir Richard

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Whethill, mayor of Calais. He came from an old Calais family and claimed priority for his son, Robert. When Lisle resisted, there was a long quarrel in which all Calais took sides. Sir Richard abused Lisle in the Deputy's own garden, and Lady Whethill made a disgraceful public attack on Lady Lisle in church, screaming insults at her "in Pilate's voice" (Pilate and Herod, Miss Byrne explains, were the two shouting partners in mystery plays). The dispute was carried to London where the Whethills boasted of their influence, and young Robert exhibited himself at court "in a coat of crimson taffeta, cut and lined with yellow sarcenet," velvet breeches and shoes to match, and a scarlet cap with red and yellow feathers. The king was thoroughly bored with the whole affair, but the two ladies kept it going, at the highest level, for years.

Another great Calais battle involved Sir Robert Wingfield. He, too, came from an entrenched official family and was on Lisle's council. He had used his position to invest in a marsh, which he had "improved," but which the king now insisted should be reflooded in the interest of defense. This battle, too, was carried to London and went on for a long time. In the end Lisle prevailed; "Wingfield's Marsh" was successfully "drowned" and, although Wingfield vowed revenge on Lisle, it remained drowned.

To drown Wingfield's marsh in Calais in the interest of defense was one thing. To pull down Lady Lisle's weir on the river Tawe at Umberleigh in Devon in the interest of navigation was, of course, quite different. In 1535 the Crown ordered a general destruction of weirs on navigable rivers. Landlords, whose weirs enabled them to corner the fish, were indignant, and none so indignant as Lady Lisle. She demanded, first, that the weir be spared, then, when it was down, that it be rebuilt. Like Lady Whethill, she became a great bore on the subject, but the weir, like the marsh, was not restored.

Although a royal commission in 1535 vindicated Lisle's government, he soon realized that he had made a mistake in accepting it. The local troubles were endless and were being inflamed by religion. At home, his interests and his wife's estates were being threatened, and he was not allowed to leave Calais except by royal license. He was also missing great oppportunities at home—opportunities in which his rivals were investing. It was all very depressing, especially when Cromwell, who was now clearly in command of everything (he was Mr. Secretary, Master of the Rolls, and Lord Privy Seal), reproved him for troubling him with trifles. The man who was changing the structure of England did not wish to be bothered by the internal squabbles of a garrison town.

Fortunately for Lisle—and for us—there was John Husee. Husee is Miss Byrne's hero, and rightly so. But for him, the correspondence would be an amorphous mass. He is "the unifying, energising agent who is ultimately to weld the material into a whole, and to give it momentum and direction." For Husee was Lisle's agent, his secretary, his universal factotum, the man who watched his interests, served him at every turn, knew everybody, had the entrée everywhere, was prepared to do anything: to buy supplies, order clothes, argue with lawyers, transport children, arrange travel, deliver presents, handle creditors, and, above all, to report regularly in writing.

Husee was a young man of thirty at the time. He had begun as a London merchant—"citizen and vintner"—and Lisle evidently found him in Calais where he was already a member of the retinue although clearly he was not tied to his post. He reveals himself as a man of great energy and charm, and infinite resourcefulness. He is the sharpest of observers, quick to note who is moving up or down at court, and generally the first to report it. Everyone knows him, welcomes him, speaks freely to him. "Here cometh my Lord Lisle's man," says Cromwell to the king, smiling benevolently as Husee enters the presence chamber with his master's New Year's gifts in 1538. He has no enemies—except perhaps the abbot of Westminster, a lordly and exacting creditor, and Sir Richard Rich, of whom no one has ever said a good word. He is a natural diplomat, and warm and sympathetic too. How disarmingly he protests when his employers (for Lady Lisle, of course, treats him as her servant: she is the real boss), in their anxiety, rebuke him for unavoidable delays! How sympathetically he consoles Lady Lisle when the expected Plantagenet heir, for whom he has obtained everything—a cradle, a display bed, "a holy-water stock with sprinkler and casting bottle"—turns out to be a

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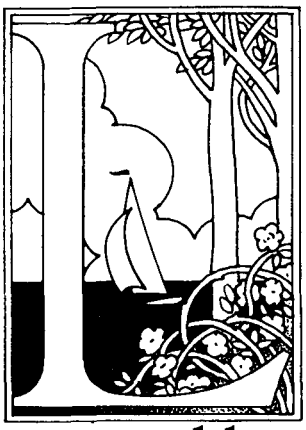

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"phantom pregnancy," or rallies Lord Lisle when the frustrations of Calais politics drive him into melancholy or despair! And then, to crown all, he is a marvelous letter writer, with a sharp eye for detail, a nice sense of humor, a pretty turn of phrase, a delightful irony. He is the most memorable character in the whole story, for it is he, above all, who brings all the rest to life.

As we read these letters, we are staggered by Husee's ubiquity and resourcefulness. But Husee, we soon find, is not alone. He is the organizer of intelligence, but there are other agents too: "fee'd men," or "privy friends," as they are called, men who are formally and officially employed by other great men at court or in the country, but to whom Lisle pays regular secret "fees"—generally £10 a year—to keep him informed whenever his interest is, or might be, involved. Lisle had at least two fee'd men in Cromwell's service—William Popley, Cromwell's man of business, and Ralph Sadler, one of the ablest of Cromwell's young protégés—and several in the country. In Devonshire, he had Sir Richard Pollard, the surveyor general and sheriff. But the most dramatic coup was achieved by Hugh Yeo, the agent for the Basset lands in the west. Through two privy friends in the employment of Lord Daubeny and one in that of the earl of Hertford (afterward the Protector Somerset), he discovered the secret plot that these two were hatching, whereby the Basset heir would lose a substantial estate for their benefit: Hertford to have the property and Daubeny to pay for an earldom with the proceeds. This plot nearly succeeded, and Daubeny, in expectation of triumph, came up to London accompanied by eighty horsemen all dressed in "new liveries of my Lord Privy Seal's colour"; but Husee, thus warned, was able to get to Cromwell in time, and Cromwell (at a price) got the king to intervene and save the property. All great men, it seems, kept these privy friends in other great men's service: that, after all, was how Cromwell built up his marvelous intelligence service, so envied by the French ambassador, and how Shakespeare's Macbeth secured his own interests:

> There's not a one of them but in his house
> I keep a servant fee'd.

Apart from such outright espionage, there was another no less necessary method of self-protection which is vividly illustrated by these letters. This is the regular, almost ritual, distribution of gifts in kind. Here again Husee is the central figure. It is he who advises who should receive gifts, and what they should receive—how large a gift will suffice, what would be most acceptable, or perhaps has already been hinted; he who collects and delivers. The most frequent gifts are of game or wine, hawks or hunting dogs. The best wine is claret from Gascony, but tastes differed. Whereas the earl of Suffolk would only look at "mighty great wines," Henry VIII, who had simple tastes (he was "wondrous pleased" with Lady Lisle's homemade marmalade), was content, like Lisle himself, with "hedge wine," which was apparently "a good *vin ordinaire*." Among the items of game are boars' heads and wild swine, baked cranes and sturgeon, venison of red and fallow deer, storks, egrets, guinea-fowl, herons and snipe, herrings, salmon, sprats, partridges, dotterels, peewits, quails and puffins. Sometimes they are distributed alive, like the quails, which were bought wholesale in Calais or Flanders and killed on arrival at Dover, or the dotterels, of which Anne Boleyn was very fond, and which were put in her garden in Greenwich until it was time to eat them. The fish came in barrels, as did the congers supplied by a Cornish parson and the puffins (which were regarded as fish, owing to their taste) sent regularly from the Basset estates in the west. Sometimes the game was made up into pasties or pies, like the lamprey pies, "baken after our Cotswold fashion," sent by a Gloucestershire gentleman, or a partridge pie which was unfortunately misshapen by immersion in the Channel, "but they found good meat in it." Once Lisle sent a porpoise, of which a section was gratefully acknowledged by Cromwell; but the more prestigious gift of a seal proved less successful. It was destined for the Lord Admiral, perhaps as an aquatic symbol, but Husee had great difficulty in delivering it. He had to keep it alive for five weeks at Wapping, where it cost him sixpence a day in fish "and yet she had not dined." When he finally presented it, the Admiral said that he had nowhere to keep it, and told him to kill it and have it baked and sent to his wife, "and so it is done."

Traffic in game entailed traffic in the means

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of catching it; so the gifts include every kind of hawk and dog: goshawks, gyrfalcons, merlins, greyhounds, lanyers, water spaniels. Red-and-white spaniels passed from France to England; English greyhounds and mastiffs were in great demand in France. The birds were liable to all kinds of accident en route: Hawks escaped, or were stolen; an unspecified bird sent to Lord Hertford survived shipwreck only to be eaten by a cat at Billingsgate, "which my Lord of Hertford took right grievously." Sometimes we find more recondite gifts. The Lord Admiral of France sent Lisle two miniscule marmosets from Brazil and "a long-tailed monkey, which is a pretty beast and gentle," with instructions for care and feeding. Lady Lisle thought to gain favor by sending one of them on to Queen Anne Boleyn, but this proved a gaffe: "the Queen loveth no such beasts," Husee reported, "nor can scant abide the sight of them"; on the other hand she appreciated a linnet, which delighted her with its incessant song. Lisle loved birds, and he and his wife seem to have kept a small menagerie: a monk of Canterbury sent Lady Lisle, by the hand of "a singing child" for whom he sought patronage, an unspecified "beast, the creature of God, once wild but now tame, to comfort your heart at such time as you be weary of prayer." One does not get the impression that Lady Lisle wearied herself much with prayer.

This constant flow of gifts is the most striking feature of the correspondence. Some of them, of course, were real gifts, in our sense of the word. Such, no doubt, was the touching present which Lady Lisle sent to the Elector Palatine after he had been her guest at Calais. She had noticed that he had picked his teeth with a pin, so she sent him her own toothpick, which she had used for seven years. Some were commissioned purchases. But most of them were an essential part of the system of patronage. Gentlemen did not give bribes. Of all the officials whom we meet, only one—Sir Thomas Pope, treasurer of the Court of Augmentations, which handled the sale of monastic lands (and afterwards founder of Trinity College, Oxford)—declined "wine or other pleasure," saying bluntly that he wanted "ready money . . . . yea, and doth look for the same." But there was no undue delicacy in defining what would be acceptable, and whether it gave satisfaction when it came. Cromwell let it be known that "a pretty dog" would not come amiss. Others specified particular kinds of hawk. The king complained that Lisle's quails were not fat enough. Husee insisted on this again and again: "Let them be very fat," he wrote, "or else they are not worth thanks."

Lisle specialized in quails, buying them up in vast quantities. They were "a prime delicacy" and could be used to sweeten requests, to attract attention, to turn away wrath. Husee was continually advising that such and such a person be remembered with wine and quails. Mr. Skut, for instance, the king's tailor, with whom Lady Lisle ran up huge bills, and who sometimes became impatient for payment, received a regular tribute of quails. On one occasion Husee did not dare call on him with twelve yards of satin to make up for Lady Lisle "because the quails be not yet come." This of course merely shifted the debt: there is a plaintive letter from the Calais poulterer begging payment for forty-three dozen quails. But the operation was worthwhile, as one episode emphatically proved.

Lady Lisle, naturally, wished to do the best for her daughters, Katherine and Anne Basset. After the usual beginner's course under the eye of a local abbess, they were sent to live with a grand French family near Calais. This entailed some agreeable correspondence and a constant commerce of hawks, dogs, salmon, marmalade, etc. It also introduced a French cousin, an aristocratic abbess whose disciplined army of nuns knitted vast quantities of nightcaps, male and female, in elegant lozenge patterns. She supplied Lady Lisle with a steady and copious flow of nightcaps and family gossip. After that, the girls were on the market. Then Lady Lisle's competitive instincts were aroused. On hearing that two of her Arundell nieces had been accepted as maids of honor at court, she decided to launch Katherine and Anne in the same warm water. So she mobilized two dexterous dowagers, the countesses of Sussex and Rutland (the latter a great oracle on court and society) and set the quails in motion. The moment to strike came when the two countesses were in waiting and the queen was actually dining off Lord Lisle's quails. The concurrent pressure of the ladies and the birds was irresistible, and the queen agreed to see both girls and choose one of them. She chose Anne, whom the king so

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fancied that at one time she was tipped for the dangerous honor of being the fifth queen of Henry VIII. Katherine stayed on with Lady Rutland.

Lady Lisle also had Basset stepdaughters. They, of course, were older. The most enjoyable is Jane, a spinster in her forties. She had no great love for her stepmother's family, but she loved her old home at Umberleigh and begged for two rooms in it, and pasture for one cow, in order to live there with her unmarried younger sister, Thomasine. Once established there, she found herself at loggerheads with the vicar, an elderly man who acted as Lady Lisle's agent. Each wrote to Lady Lisle denouncing the other. Jane accused the vicar of embezzling the fish; the vicar retaliated by intercepting and suppressing her letters. Finally, sister Thomasine decided that she had had enough and bolted. Rescued before dawn by a raiding party led by the vicar, she fled to Cornwall leaving her clothes behind. When we last see Jane, she is still at Umberleigh with one maid, two cows, and a horse. "Also she hath a greyhound lieth upon one of the beds day and night, but it be when she holdeth him in her hands and that every time when she goeth to the door."

Most important, of course, were the three Basset sons. The eldest, John, was sent to Lincoln's Inn, and then, being married to the eldest Plantagenet daughter in order to secure the lands, was on the way to being "the diamant of Devonshire." Miss Byrne describes him as "a dull dog." The second, George, was first placed in an abbey, then briefly crammed, with his younger brother, at Saint-Omer, and sent, in the usual English fashion, to "wait" in the house of Lisle's intimate friend and ally, Sir Francis Bryan, before disappearing into Cornwall, where he founded a long-lasting branch of the family. He is described as "self-effacing."

So we come to the youngest son, James. He was not self-effacing. On the contrary, he was "a precocious little horror," spoiled, charming, sophisticated, and, like his mother, determined to get his way—as he generally did. After Reading Abbey, he was sent to Paris, to the Collège de Calvi. The president of the Parlement of Paris, who had met Lisle in Calais (he had come in the train of the ambassador-admiral), had promised to look after him in Paris, but once there, he soon forgot his promise and James was taken over by a group of English scholars at the university, of whom the principal was John Bekynsaw. They took care of him and later, when he returned to Paris from the crammer in Saint-Omer, placed him, with a tutor, in the house of a kindly French merchant, Guillaume de Gras. But James had no taste for private tuition: he was determined to go to the university, to the fashionable Collège de Navarre. There, he explained, he would get to know the sons of the duc de Vendôme and the duc de Guise and such persons; and of course he went. Once there, he got what he wanted in other ways too. Lady Lisle in Calais, le Gras and Bekynsaw in Paris, were all manipulated by a determined boy of ten. Since he was the youngest son, his parents had destined him for the Church, and the Lisles, with their old-fashioned notions, naturally assumed that a fat benefice would be found for him, with all necessary dispensations for tender age, nonresidence, etc. He was to end, no doubt, as a grand worldly bishop, like Lisle's friend (and creditor) Bishop Sherburn of Chichester who, at the age of ninety-five, astonished his fellow commissioners for the valuation of church lands by giving them a Good Friday fish dinner for seven hundred persons—"such a dinner of fish," said one of them, as none present had ever seen "for the quantity and goodness of them"; or like Bishop Veysey of Exeter whom we see arriving in London to call on Cromwell accompanied by eighty horsemen in livery, and scattering twenty nobles in tips. They reckoned without Archbishop Cranmer, who absolutely forbade any cure of souls for a child, however well connected. So James had to be content with minor orders and the income from a prebend in Cornwall. He never went further in the Church. He was, as Husee noted, "meeter to serve the temporal powers than the spiritual dignities"—as indeed, in the end, he did, passing from the household of Bishop Gardiner to that of Queen Mary. But he was not entirely worldly. Marrying Mary Roper, the granddaughter of Sir Thomas More, he was absorbed into that devoted Catholic circle; and perhaps it was for his sake that his father-in-law, William Roper, afterwards relieved the wants of his old protector John Bekynsaw, and through his influence that his great-nephew Sir Robert Bassett (if he is correctly

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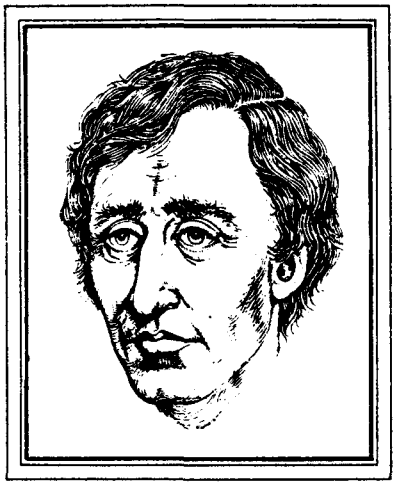

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identified) wrote one of the many family biographies of Sir Thomas More.

Such were the main interests of the Lisles in Calais. But what, we naturally ask, about the revolution going on in England? Did they not notice it? Yes, when they had to. They could hardly fail to notice the execution of Anne Boleyn, for Lisle, in effect, provided the executioner. She was to be beheaded by the sword, not the ax—a skill that was practiced only by the French—so an expert was sent from Calais. Also, the affair had, for the Lisles, an unfortunate consequence. One of those who was framed and executed with the queen, as her supposed lover, was Sir Henry Norris, Keeper of the Privy Purse, who had been Lisle's chief informant and "faithful assured friend." All Lisle's interests at court had been managed for him by Norris, whose services, constantly extolled by Husee, had been recognized by valuable gifts—a superlative falcon, the best horse that ever came out of Flanders, etc. When he was charged, the Lisles were dismayed. Putting first things first, they tried—without waiting for their "very friend" to be hanged, drawn and quartered—to get a grant of his confiscated lands. But how could one put in a bid without an immediate successor to Norris himself as friend at court? Husee at first suggested Sir John Russell for this office, but then, finding Russell in earnest colloquy with Lisle's enemy Whethill, feared that he "had taken the wrong pig by the ear" and recommended Sir Thomas Heneage. Eleven dozen quails and a hogshead of Gascon wine were quickly delivered to Heneage, and snipe and wine were sent off to Cromwell. All was of no avail. Lisle was told that he had applied too late. Russell smugly said that he could have secured something if only he had been asked in time, and it was thought prudent to recognize his goodwill with wine and quails.

Norris's execution was doubly unfortunate for Lisle, because he was at that moment seeking to pick up another windfall. His spies had given him early notice of the impending dissolution of the monasteries, and he had naturally mobilized Norris. He also wrote direct to Cromwell. The abbey of Beaulieu was his first choice, being conveniently close to the Lisle lands in Hampshire; but that was asking too much—the greater abbeys were not yet to be dissolved, and anyway one of Cromwell's young men had his eye on it. So Lisle's fee'd man in Cromwell's service discreetly suppressed the letter. But Lisle was not to be restrained. He wrote direct to the king, begging him "to help me to some old abbey in mine old days." If not Beaulieu, there was Southwick. Waverley, too, he was told, was "a pretty thing." Finally, he decided that it was necessary to accept the advice given to Lady Lisle: that she should come over in person, bringing her husband in tow, in order to sue for "one of the abbeys, towards the maintenance of my Lord's and your good Ladyship's charges."

In the end, thanks to this visit, and a new and closer relationship with Cromwell, who was determined to cut out intermediaries, Lisle did get an abbey: the priory of Frithelstock in Devonshire, conveniently close to the Basset home at Umberleigh; but the officials of the Court of Augmentations saw to it that there were many obstructions before he could call it his own. The chancellor of the court was the dreadful Rich, immortalized by his perjury at the trial of Sir Thomas More. "He is full of dissimulation," Husee reported: "I fear that he will so handle himself that he will deserve neither thanks nor reward. He passeth all that I ever sued to." However, in the end (Rich having received a velvet gown) all was well, and in August 1537 Husee could tell Lisle that his "long tracted suit is finished" and "your Lordship is now prior and Lord of Fristock."

So far so good. In 1537 the Lisles are still living splendidly in Calais, entertaining as lavishly as "the best duke in England." There are indeed some difficulties. The unpaid grocer is getting impatient and threatening to cut off credit; the bishop of Chichester is discreetly, the abbot of Westminister stiffly, demanding repayment of their debts; the weir at Umberleigh is down and all Lady Lisle's efforts cannot rebuild it. But the property is still basically intact, its future assured by marriage; the children are placed; and although Thomas Cromwell has now apparently established a complete monopoly of power, relations with him—perpetually sweetened with quails and wine, hawks, dogs, hunks of porpoise, etc.—seem particularly close. Thanks to that special relationship, Lisle's "back friends" in Calais—false friends who go sneaking up to London—are frustrated. Husee is constantly alert, always ready to wait on the

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Lord Privy Seal when he is not too busy with "the Carthusians" or "these matters" (that is, state trials and executions), and the Lord Privy Seal is invariably solicitous, invariably reassuring: he is "your Lordship's unfeigned friend." "As long as the King's Grace doth live, and he together," he assures Lisle, "you shall remain the King's Deputy at Calais ... you shall die Deputy of Calais." And Lisle believed it. Cromwell, he wrote, was his "special good Lord," "my only and most assured friend and last refuge in all my suits."

Alas for all these promises. Politics never stand still, and in revolutions the changes can be very fast. From 1537 the terms of life shift, and a course of events begins, which turns these hitherto purposeless annals into a fast-moving drama—and which, incidentally, has preserved these records for us. For without it they would have been dissipated long ago; our knowledge of the public events of the reign of Henry VIII would then have been diminished; and the Lisles, the Bassets, and all their family circle would have been—as they are after 1540—mere names in genealogical records, without human identity or voice or the breath of life.

How did things go wrong? Why did Cromwell, in the last weeks of his power, call Lisle back to London, confiscate his papers, and have him thrown into the Tower, from which he would never emerge, and from which he was expected to emerge, like so many others, only to grace the scaffold? Why indeed did Cromwell himself fall, moving, with such shocking suddenness, from apparently unchallenged authority to a traitor's death? The answer, as Miss Byrne shows, with meticulous scholarship, is to be found in three converging courses of events: the treason of Cardinal Pole; the struggle for power between Cromwell and his conservative rivals; and the religious developments in Calais.

Reginald Pole was the king's cousin on the Yorkist—that is on Lisle's—side. He had been expensively educated and amply beneficed by the king and had lived in Venice on his bounty, the center of a Platonic circle, in contact with Thomas More and other humanists at home. Henry had hoped to have him as his archbishop of York, after Wolsey; but the king's divorce, his marriage with Anne Boleyn, and the breach with Rome put an end to all that, and in 1536, after the execution of More and Fisher, Pole did the unforgivable thing: he recited to the king, in writing, the full catalogue of his crimes. From that moment Henry would pursue Pole with all the hatred which he felt toward those—like More and Anne Boleyn—whom he had once loved and who, in his view, had betrayed him; and Pole, on his side, became a bitter enemy in deeds as well as in words: as cardinal and papal legate, he appealed to foreign powers to unite and dethrone the heretic king. Henry sought to have Pole kidnapped in Liège, "trussed up and conveyed to Calais." He was resolved to lay hands on him and destroy him. Nor was that all: with his hatred of Pole was joined fear for the succession, still hanging by a slender thread, and hatred of all the remaining members of the rival house, the White Rose. That meant the Poles and the Courtenays: the cardinal's mother, the aged countess of Salisbury, his elder brother Lord Montague, and his cousin, the marquis of Exeter. As Henry told the French ambassador, he was "resolved to exterminate this house of Montague, which is still of the White Rose faction, and also the family of Pole, to which the Cardinal belongs."

At that cannibal court, where, as Husee said, every man was for himself, two great men at least believed sincerely in what they were doing: Thomas Cromwell and Archbishop Cranmer. Cromwell might be helping the king to build up the machinery of tyranny, but it was a tyranny that was to be used for a specific policy: the reform of the Church. In 1539 that tyranny, and that policy, had isolated Henry in Europe and had almost isolated Cromwell and Cranmer in England. With the rulers of Europe combining from without, and Pole calling for revolt from within, the politics of the English court were polarized. On one side, Cromwell urged Henry further on the path of defiance and reform, proposing an alliance with German Protestantism and marriage with a German princess, Anne of Cleves. On the other side, more conservative men—men who were happy to see monasteries dissolved and papal authority rejected but had no love of religious or social change—declared that reform had gone far enough: that it must now be stabilized on a Catholic base, and defended externally, not by confronting, but by splitting the Catholic powers. The leaders of this party

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were Thomas, duke of Norfolk, now back from suppressing revolt in the north, and Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, now back from his embassy abroad.

Between these two parties the king occupied a middle position. On one hand, he was conservative, opposed to "Lutheran" heresy. On the other hand, he appreciated Cromwell, the architect of his new power, the best servant (as he would afterward admit) that he had ever had. The conservatives therefore did not openly attack Cromwell: they attacked heresy, which the king, too, hated; and Cromwell did not openly attack religious conservatism: he concentrated his fire against the king's enemies, the Papacy and the traitor Pole. The king preserved a judicious balance, and emphasized it by sending, in almost equal numbers, Catholics as "traitors" to the scaffold and Protestants as "heretics" to the stake.

How could Lisle avoid being drawn into this battle? Calais was itself in the center of it. Internally divided, geographically "exposed to all the winds of doctrine that blew," it was a refuge for heretics from France, Flanders, and Germany, and religious differences inflamed all the existing discontents. The established families who dominated the council were orthodox, but Cranmer's "commissary," who controlled the clergy, supported heresy. As a secular-minded official, untouched by new ideas, or indeed by any kind of ideas, Lisle followed the royal line. So long as Cromwell was going slowly, destroying only monasteries and the authority of Rome, there was no difficulty. The dissolution of monasteries, after all, could be useful. So could the condemnation of Pole: Lisle tried hard to get one of his rich livings for young Master James. But by 1537 the Protestants were in trouble with the council, and the archbishop's vigorous new commissary, their supporter, was complaining that "much papistry doth reign still, and chiefly among them that be rulers." Cromwell and Cranmer took up the cause of the heretics. At one time, a colleague reported to Lisle, Cromwell "swore by God's Blood we were all papists . . . and I swore by God's heart it was not so." When Lady Lisle interceded for a priest whom the commissary had denounced for popish observances, Cromwell let fly. If the councillors winked any longer at such abuses, he wrote, the king would dismiss them all, for it was against all reason that they should heed "the prayers of women and their fond flickerings" rather than "his just laws." No wonder Husee was alarmed and begged Lisle to walk warily. As Lisle had hopes of benefits still to come—the dissolved friary at Calais and a pension of £400—he did.

Next year there was a crisis provoked by the arrival from Germany of a young English priest called Adam Damplip. He was a "Sacramentary," that is, a Zwinglian, who denied the Real Presence in no uncertain manner: a mouse, he said, "would as soon eat the Body of God as any other cake"; and other such heresies. These doctrines split the council, and both parties appealed to London. When Damplip himself fled to London, Lisle thought it time to act. He hurriedly sent a water spaniel to Cromwell, and in response to a hint, poor Master Basset had to surrender his favorite hawk—"a merlin for partridges as good as flies." Unfortunately the hawk, on its first flight under its new owner, was pricked by a thorn and died. After that an uneasy calm returned to Calais.

It did not last long. Next year the Sacramentaries returned to the charge, more insolent than ever, and Lisle, realizing that they were being secretly supported by Cromwell and Cranmer, began cautiously to change sides. One man to whom he appealed was Sir Anthony Browne, the Master of the Horse. Having secured Battle Abbey for themselves, the Brownes would become one of the mainstays of English Catholicism. "I beseech you," Lisle ended his letter, "keep this my letter close, for if it should come to my Lord Privy Seal's knowledge or ear, I were half undone." Perhaps it did come to the Lord Privy Seal's ear: who knows whether he had not a fee'd man with the Master of the Horse? In any case, Cromwell must, by now, have suspected. Meanwhile, in London, the struggle had become even more intense. The conservatives secured the passage of the Act of Six Articles declaring Catholic doctrine, while Cromwell was staking all on the German marriage. At the end of 1539 the German bride, Anne of Cleves, stopped at Calais on her way to London and was stuck there by bad weather. Fortunately—since she stayed for fifteen days, with a train of 263 attendants and 238 horses—the cost of her entertainment did not fall on Lisle. When she arrived in London and the king met her, his heart sank. He went

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Conrad Phillip Kottak, Editor

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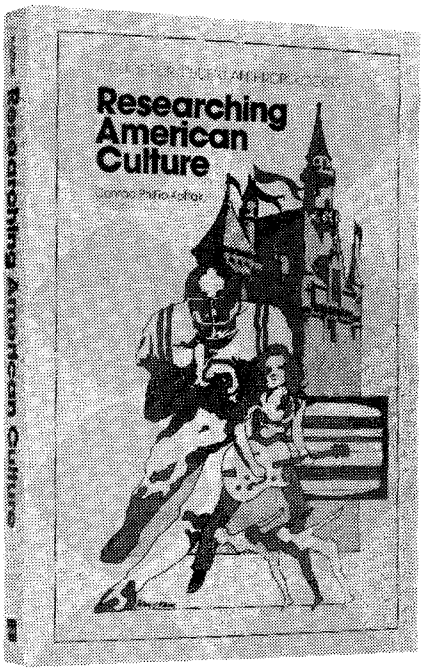

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through with the marriage, but with inward reluctance, and almost immediately began to seek a means of release by annulment.

The first task was to break up the foreign coalition that had necessitated the marriage. For this purpose the duke of Norfolk was sent on a secret mission to France. He performed his task well. The king of France was perfectly willing to agree with his brother of England—if only his brother of England would get rid of that dreadful heretic, the cause of all the trouble, Thomas Cromwell. This of course was just what the duke wanted too. Nor was this all. Both coming and going, the duke, as Miss Byrne has shown, stopped in Calais and evidently concerted action with Lisle. On his return, a commission was set up to investigate the religious troubles in Calais. Rather surprisingly (since he was a party to the dispute) Lisle himself was on it. Less surprisingly, its report was a condemnation of the Sacramentaries. Thus on all sides, it seemed, the enemy was closing in on Cromwell; and Lisle was with the enemy.

Even so, Cromwell did not see himself as defeated. Admittedly, the Cleves marriage had been a mistake, but it was a mistake that could be rectified; and although he was hated in the country, no doubt he thought himself indispensable to the king. His confidence, in this dark hour, is extraordinary: we find him reassuring the Sacramentaries who had been sent in chains from Calais, promising them that they would go free (in fact they would be burnt). But then he had managed it before. Religious radicalism and royal divorce had brought him to power; why should not the same means keep him in it? What was needed, while he arranged the divorce, was an external enemy. A new conspiracy must be discovered, originating, if possible, with "the traitor Pole."

Luckily, just at this time, such a conspiracy presented itself. A priest, one Botolf, known as Sir Gregory Sweetlips, had bolted from Calais to France, and had afterward told his associates that he had been to Rome, had seen the Pope and Pole, and had conspired with them to surrender Calais to the French. His story was suspect, but it served its purpose. Also, Botolf had once been Lisle's chaplain. How convenient! Of all the conservative enemies of Cromwell, Lisle was the most exposed. He was the enemy of reform in Calais, which was now revealed as "a nest of papists." He was a member of the White Rose faction and the family of Pole which Henry was resolved to destroy. Now he could be directly implicated with Pole himself. His destruction would be a warning to the conservatives not to join the party of Norfolk and Gardiner; it would show who was master of the king's government; and it would be a blow struck for religious reform.

Such, it seems, was Cromwell's plan. It nearly succeeded. In the spring of 1540 Lisle was summoned back to London. He set out confidently. In Calais it was thought that he was going to be made an earl. In London, he attended the House of Lords. He was present at a chapter meeting and feast of the Knights of the Garter. Then the blow fell. He was arrested and disappeared into the Tower. His documents, his goods and plate were seized. Cromwell it was who was made an earl.

Meanwhile, what about the royal divorce? Alas, it was here that the master plan came to grief. The duke of Norfolk had a young niece, Katherine, daughter of his brother Lord Edmund Howard, comptroller of Calais, recently deceased. At the house of his ally, the bishop of Winchester, this seductive girl was placed before the royal eye. The operation was successful. From that moment, Cromwell was doomed. If he did not achieve an annulment of Henry's marriage, he would have failed, as his master Cardinal Wolsey had failed, and, like him, would be cast aside. But now, even if he secured an annulment, he would have failed no less: for as the husband of Katherine Howard, the king would be in the camp of an enemy from whom Cromwell could expect no mercy. So, at the last moment, the tables were turned. It was game, set, and match to the duke and the bishop.

If Cromwell had won that last desperate round in the struggle for power, Lisle would no doubt have gone to the block along with his equally innocent kinsmen, the Courtenays and the Poles. In the Tower, he must have expected no less. That he did not suggests that Henry himself thought him innocent. Perhaps the execution of the last of the Pole family, the octogenarian countess of Salisbury in 1541, slaked the king's thirst for blood. The faction of the White Rose was now dead, and although the Tudor succession was not yet firm, the Tudor despotism had little fear from

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the last of the Plantagenets. Even so, Lisle remained in prison for eighteen months. It was only after the execution of Katherine Howard that the king, being now at leisure, issued his pardon. Lisle was so delighted by the news that he died next day, still in the Tower, "through too much rejoicing."

Such is the story told by *The Lisle Letters*. It is told in great detail in six very large volumes, and, on the editor's part, with great scholarship and great art. That is, she allows the letters to tell it themselves, with as much explanation and commentary as she thinks necessary for that purpose. The commentary is copious, but it is sustained by an infectious enthusiasm which carries even the most recondite explanation. The scholarship, gathered in a lifetime, extends to every subject. Though sometimes repetitive, it neither holds up the story nor weighs it down, and the reader will hardly notice the range of editorial skill that has been necessary to overcome problems of orthography, paleography, dating, interpretation. Above all, I am impressed by the editor's invariable freshness and enthusiasm, which infuses the whole work. At first, the pace is slow, for we must get to know the scenario and the persons; but soon it quickens: we come to know the characters and find ourselves in the middle of a fascinating family saga, a sixteenth-century *War and Peace* or *A la recherche du temps perdu*. This book has been my companion for several weeks. I read it, at first, as a labor. At the end I would not wish it to have been a page shorter.

The Staging of Culture

THEATER AND REVOLUTION: THE CULTURE OF THE FRENCH STAGE. *By Frederick Brown. Viking. $20.*

Reviewed by VERNON YOUNG

The scope of Frederick Brown's subject extends from the *esprit de géométrie* that animated the politics, manners, and scenography of Louis XIV's court to the abortive fourth revolution of 1968, including a familiar number of those crucial eruptions—civic or rhetorical—without which your generic Frenchman would be unable to define, let alone to glorify, himself. T. E. Lawrence once observed that the Arab "could be swung on an idea as on a cord." This you will find equally true of the French if, having ridden comfortably on a more moderate conception of them than you'd prefer to entertain—derived, perhaps, from Montaigne or Tocqueville, from Renoir or Braque (or from Escoffier!)—you revisit the historical scene laid end to end. Availing yourself of the telling montage from 1789 to yesterday—the festival of the constitution, Bonaparte's coup d'etat and his return from Elba, the revolutions of 1848 and 1870, art for art's sake, art for sensation's sake, the Dreyfus Affair, surrealism, existentialism, the nouvelle vague, and the 1968 occupation of the Odéon—you will realize anew that France is par excellence the nation of the manifesto; that the eternal Frenchman is not reasonable, he is merely logical; and that logic serves the spirit of despotism more eagerly than it does that of the reasonable doubt. Whether or not Mr. Brown had some such conclusion in mind, it seems an inescapable one from the evidence he has adduced. I'll confess that I'm in doubt about his conclusions because I find his arguments equivocal. He has compiled an impressive amount of ideological matter from several aspects of French culture, and he has been ruthless at exposing that form of modernism which, as he puts it, "expressed a yearning for some primitive, if not indeed religious, order of human experience." Yet his line of flight as he pursues his quarry is erratic.

I have the distinct impression that the unqualified subject of Mr. Brown's attention (even affection) is first engaged on page 154 with his patently sympathetic chronicle of "The Bohemian Fringe" of the mid-nineteenth century, which he rapidly (in this chapter) brings down to the year 1905 so that he can introduce Charles Dullin, then aged twenty, "bivouacking with fellow expatriates from Lyons in a sleazy hotel" and singing for his supper at the Lapin Agile in Montmartre. In order to explain the peculiar character of certain modern French theater personalities who intrigued him, Brown found it necessary to research their antecedents; these in turn suggested a provenance in the distinction between entertainment and culture, which

VERNON YOUNG is the author of *Cinema Borealis: Ingmar Bergman and the Swedish Ethos* and *On Film: Unpopular Essays on a Popular Art*.

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was a consequence of the rise of the bourgeoisie under Louis Napoleon. Behind that phenomenon he found the aftermath of the Bonapartist division of functions that succeeded the hour of egalitarian tyranny of the French Revolution, which, in its turn, was a rival tyranny—a tyranny of the people set up by consummately theatrical populists, such as Robespierre and David, to replace the preceding absolutism of the monarch.

I am only guessing, of course, and whether Mr. Brown traveled backward or forward, whether he moved from the particular to the general or vice versa is less important than the ambiguity he embraces, to my sense, as I strain to convey his thesis accurately.

Shortly ventured, I believe that the title and subtitle of Mr. Brown's history are misleading, despite his odd preliminary explanation that his book deals as much with the staging of culture as with the culture of the stage in France. If that is the case, then the "staging" with which he is principally concerned is of a late growth and might better be termed the staging of a counterculture. But the mainstream to which it ran counter in the nineteenth century is largely ignored, or summarized negatively, by Mr. Brown because he could not accommodate it to his fugitively implied theme of "how, in modern France, the theatrical avant-garde has consistently evoked and used the popular tradition." I find this assertion dubious; the popular tradition would be the bourgeois theater that existed; some sort of "people's theater" would be that mélange of proto-Left-Bank stuff emerging from "a twilight zone of melodramas on the periphery of Paris." Now, the avant-garde represented by Mr. Brown's antagonists (you might call them) did not, by his copious evidence, "consistently evoke" *any* tradition: it proceeded in a hubbub of rhetoric, in a miasma of ill-digested populism and imported mystique (from Gordon Craig, for instance, as Mr. Brown brilliantly but at excessive length illustrates).

Before the chapter on Bohemia, which I have just cited, there is nothing except a hint in the preliminary note that the greater part of this book will consist of four biographies—those of Charles Dullin, Jacques Copeau, Firmin Gémier, and Jean-Louis Barrault (with a few auxiliary careers thrown in)—and that these will do duty as "the culture of the French stage" during the previous century, or at least until World War II in ours, where Mr. Brown leaves the didactic continuity with a leap, in order to end the book with the student uprising of 1968. This was an event, one feels, he wistfully approves, even as his intelligence forces him to reveal its blatant aimlessness. Curiously, he ignores almost completely the theater of Giraudoux, of Camus, and of Sartre.

My conception of Mr. Brown's difficulty in this multiple venture is that he uncovered at least three subjects to discuss as he composed the book (one of them, surely, the French mind in extremis). Although he broached each of these subjects, he did not develop one of them comprehensively. Yet, in each instance, Mr. Brown provides as much exhaustive documentation—supported by frequently dazzling paragraphs of connective metaphor—as might have filled three separate volumes.

Although Brown begins his history with the rise of the bourgeoisie and the theater of Eugène Scribe in the early nineteenth century, his chronology, suspended but returned to, has actually commenced with the court of the seventeenth century, in order to illustrate what it was that the Revolution overthrew, what kind of theater was produced by the radically changing ethos. Yet at this point of departure Brown is incomprehensibly one-sided. He invokes the heroic theater of Pierre Corneille by way of emphasizing the unheroic theater of Scribe. He renders no account of Molière's theater, which was neither heroic nor, in Scribe's terms, antiheroic, nor, by any early definition, popular. One of the problems in trying to follow Mr. Brown's drift is that he seldom makes it clear whether he is discussing the evolution of a modern *theater*, meaning a democratic audience and diversity of physical presentation, or the development of modern *drama*, which belongs to the history of ideas (whatever it may incorporate of changes in theater design, stage, or auditorium). A previously unacquainted reader would never learn from Brown's book that the modern drama became fully developed in Scandinavia (with seminal hints from French playwrights, among them Dumas Fils, Émile Augier, and Victorien Sardou). Since the Frenchmen in this connection belonged to a theater Brown does not want to acknowledge—except to sweep it away as bourgeois—what remains is his odd assortment of actor-

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managers who reproduced the theater of others. Copeau wrote a few plays, but he is most importantly known as the founder of the Vieux-Colombier; Dullin is best known as an actor; Barrault, of course, as a mime.

Whatever reformation these men effected in the field of theater construction (which was far less than the Germans), however beneficial they sometimes were in the discovery of new talent, however applauded they may have been as actors—their contribution to the life of the mind in art reads (by way of the profuse quotations mercilessly supplied by Mr. Brown) like pure dementia. Gémier's infatuation with size and numbers and his drivel about the magnetic ambience of the sacred mob "in whom thought runs untrammelled"; Copeau's long, loony infatuation with voids and mass and geometrical abstraction and his virtual elimination (in theory) of the actor; Dullin's striving "to exhume a pristine spirit in the ersatz body of culture" by recourse to "improvisation," that perennial counsel of despair, and going haywire in Manhattan where he donned a cowboy hat, while accusing Copeau of preferring books to reality; and above all, Jean-Louis Barrault, that butterfly-dreaming-it's-a-man, sleeping onstage in Dullin's bed, gushing about "unfreezing the Silence," or following the lure of Mesmer, or expounding a mystic populism with sentences such as: "Only a boundless love of mankind can make possible the marriage of our personal heart with the collective heart"—all are, as Mr. Brown encourages us to conclude, oblique and aberrant; most are perversions of Rousseau or retakes of the derailed fanaticism that had comprised "the ideas of '89."

Intermittently, Mr. Brown seems to think that he has been charting the articulation of a popular theater. But surely, in any authentic meaning of the term, no such thing established itself anywhere, unless you want to accept the world of the Broadway musical, or the international burlesque house, or—the likeliest candidate—the motion picture. Since Brown troubles to devote a terminal chapter to Marcel Carné and Jacques Prévert's *Children of Paradise*, he leads one to expect that he will conclude his survey with a decisive statement on film, the universal art of our time. But here he is somewhat confused. He obviously would have liked a film such as *Children of Paradise* to have appeared simultaneously with the students' revolt of 1968. Since history did not oblige, he has reinterpreted the 1944 film as a political allegory because it takes place mainly on the Boulevard du Temple (resurrected in Nice). To be sure, the setting is that of the originally subversive location where a popular theater, for a few decades, reigned supreme. Brown is so focused on the momentary apparitions of Vichy and the Resistance that he misses what Carné and Prévert's film is actually about. Its raison d'être is the equivocal nature of truth, which is represented by Garance, who is first shown as a naked figure in a tub. Everyone, that is, the four protagonists—an aristocrat, a criminal, a "legitimate" actor, and a mime—wants to possess her. None does. And at the last, the mime (poetry?) is inexorably separated from her by the milling crowd that Brown takes to be the faceless hero of the film!

A concluding discourse on the French cinema—its theater origins or its radical departures from French theater traditions—would have been an interesting occasion for the kind of broad speculation and intricate cross-reference that Mr. Brown handles so well. However, if he really believes that *Children of Paradise* can be summed up as "the apotheosis of the Street," and if he really believes that the bodiless arms holding candelabra were in Jean Cocteau's *Blood of a Poet*, he is not yet to be trusted very far with this subject.

Necessary Questions

PHILOSOPHICAL EXPLANATIONS. *By Robert Nozick. Harvard University Press. $25.*

Reviewed by MARK LILLA

A couple of years ago, a professor of philosophy published in these pages a provocative essay with an equally provocative title: "Never Speculate, Never Explain—The State of Contemporary Philosophy." The charges he made are familiar by now to anyone who keeps up with academic philosophy: the discipline is overly analytic and overly consumed with language; formal logic has so

MARK LILLA is managing editor of *The Public Interest*.

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evolved into a branch of mathematics that it must move out of philosophy departments; interesting developments on the Continent are misunderstood, distorted, or ignored; the vital existential questions out of which philosophy was born are not directly addressed (or, if they are, the discussions are indecipherable). Mainline Anglo-American philosophers have suffered these criticisms with more or less good humor throughout this century, though lately with somewhat less. In the United States, at least, things have gotten downright nasty—"analytics" and self-styled "pluralists" shout each other down at conventions, and each side offers its own slate of candidates for association offices.

It is true that self-questioning and faction can be signs of the decline in importance of a particular discipline, yet it is equally true that a lively and fecund discipline may generate these sorts of divisions precisely because it matters and its issues are taken seriously. This, I think, is the case with contemporary economics, the attacks on which attest to its importance and vigor. But can the same really be said of contemporary philosophy?

There is every reason to think so, for in the past year, two highly respected philosophers have published major books that speak directly to the self-questioning and doubt in which academic philosophy finds itself. Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* has been particularly well received because it is both a lucid history of modern philosophy *and* a tightly reasoned argument against it. With clear yet analytic prose, Rorty examines philosophy-as-epistemology since Descartes conceived of the " 'idea' idea" (Quine's phrase) and concludes that it is based on a mistaken concept of mind as a mirror of reality, when in fact there are no foundations of knowledge beneath our "hermeneutic conversations" with each other and the world around us. Although Rorty has clearly learned much from Continental philosophy and theories of literary criticism, he also uses the arguments of modern analytic thinkers—Wittgenstein, Quine, Sellars—and the American pragmatists in order to revive the notion of philosophy as speculation and interlocution.

And now we have Robert Nozick's 764-page opus, *Philosophical Explanations*. To the general reading public, Nozick, a professor of philosophy at Harvard, is probably best known for his clever and inventive first book, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*, which won a National Book Award in 1975. *Philosophical Explanations* exhibits the same intellectual virtues of that first book but is in an entirely different class. What are we to make of a book with chapters titled "Metaphysics," "Something and Nothing," "Epistemology," "Free Will," "Ethics," and "Philosophy and the Meaning of Life"? Robert Nozick seems not to suffer from the insecurity and bashfulness that make the rest of us set our sights so much closer to the ground. He has never taught a course twice at Harvard, it is said, and this book testifies to the voraciousness of his intellectual appetite. But can he really blame the reader for wondering whether any one book—or, for that matter, any single thinker—displaying this breadth, can say much in depth on all these matters?

Skepticism gives way to fascination as we get into the book because it becomes clear that Nozick is writing as much about how philosophy should be conducted as he is about the central questions of philosophy themselves. The problem with analytic philosophy, he says, is not that it is too narrow or antiseptic but that it has become coercive in its method and intent, demanding that "if the person refuses to accept the conclusion, he *dies*." Noncoercive philosophy means not just arguing and proving, but teaching and explaining how things might be true; it means building a conceptual Parthenon, not a single stack of bricks (a metaphor Isaiah Berlin has often invoked in his description of philosophical pluralism). To that end, Nozick uses the interrogative voice as often as the indicative, asking hundreds of unanswered questions and giving the book more question marks than any other book in my memory. He wants to place philosophy within the humanities and likens it, at one point, to practicing an art. But perhaps his better simile is between philosophy and the sex act: "It unfortunately will frighten and offend the puritans of the mind (do the two puritanisms share a common root?) even as it expands others and brings them joy." (When asked if sex is dirty, Woody Allen once answered, "Only if it's done right." Might the same be true of philosophy?)

Of course, there is pluralism and there is

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pluralism. The analytics are often rightly dismissive of the pluralists, I think, for what they regard as unseemly attempts to gain, through accusation and bullying, what they, the pluralists, have been unable to gain in the marketplace of ideas. Yes, it's true that the logical positivists (Ayer, for instance) and other analytics have maintained an ignorant contempt for great thinkers in other traditions, such as Heidegger, but the pluralists act as if this contempt for their own contemporary writings somehow establishes both the legitimacy of their own positions and the need for a "fair representation" in curricula. "All great ideas are initially resisted" does not entail "All resisted ideas become great ones."

One cannot level the usual charges of "softness" and "carelessness" at *Philosophical Explanations*, for, although Nozick has the heart of the humanist, he has the mind and pen of the analyst. Arguments—rather, explanations—are usually quite abstract, and there is much use of hypotheticals and symbolic logic. (Most of the formal logic, though, is kept to the endnotes unless absolutely necessary, making the book highly readable.) Nozick will not spare the reader having to think carefully through his positions with the possibility that objections to them will be found; what distinguishes him from his analytic brethren is his habit of asking necessary questions he cannot answer and admitting it when his own answers do not satisfy him. At one point he writes, "If we cannot solve the problem, at least we can surround it."

It should be clear by now that a book of this breadth and ambition cannot be easily summarized, particularly since Nozick's point explicitly is *not* to prove the truth of a limited number of statements about the traditional topics of philosophy. ("Do I love truth less or understanding more?" he asks.) Each section of the book could stand alone, but there is a unity to them that might be described—whatever injustices that description may do to each specific section.

The first half of the book is made up of somewhat difficult chapters on metaphysics and epistemology, chapters that undoubtedly will be discussed and debated in detail by those "in the trade." To the general reader they are more important as preparation for the remaining chapters on free will, ethics, and philosophy and the meaning of life. Nozick examines three traditional questions in the opening chapters: what does it mean to be a "self"; why is there something rather than nothing; and does skepticism undercut all knowledge? Put very crudely, his explanations are: what makes me an "I" is my ability to refer to myself as me and define ("synthesize") what "I" consist of; there is something *and* nothing, which calls into question our reductive attempts to get to the bottom of "everything"; and, while we may not always know we know, we can "track" the truth even if the skeptics are right about certain fundamental problems. (This leaves out, of course, the interesting discussions of probability, men floating in tanks, Hindu mysticism, et cetera.)

These answers are important for his main enterprise, which is to conclude that people and life are valuable. He wants very much for this to be true, but the claims of determinists and nihilists weigh heavily on him. We do have free will, he says, if our actions "track bestness"; that is, we may not will all our right actions, but if we could, we would still choose the same actions. Some actions are automatic, but we are not automatons; this, at least, gives us the possibility of being valuable.

But "value" is not some property out there that attaches itself to things or is intrinsically part of them. Value is something we place on something when we choose to value it—"the existence of value lies in its possibility." Just as we synthesize ourselves and the facts in the world around us, Nozick writes, we synthesize value and bring it into the world, and it is out of this synthetic act that ethics arises. His chapter on ethics is probably the most accomplished in the book but is almost impossible to describe concisely. Let this crude summary suffice. Whether value comes into the world is our choice, but the nature of value is not subjective. Roughly speaking, "unity" is more valuable than "disunity." Ethics, then, consists in "unifying" our lives internally (our "ethical push") and treating others as if they were doing the same (our "ethical pull"). (I do find it disturbing that Nozick does not use the words "virtue" and "obligation" here or discuss their usage in the history of moral concepts and practices. Why are most contemporary philosophers still so allergic to incorporating the history of ideas into their work? Do they really believe, with Nozick, that

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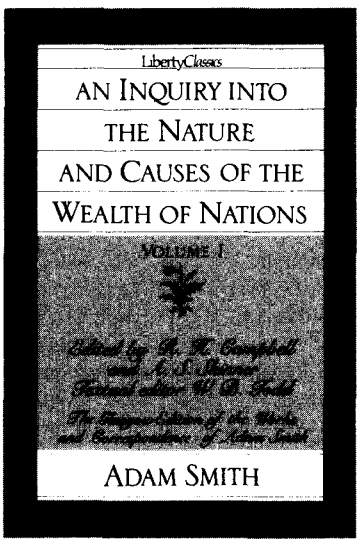

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By Adam Smith

The Glasgow Edition

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"those who do know the past are doomed to repeat it, pedantically"?)

What should be the role of philosophy, then? To help us lead worthwhile lives. And how do we lead worthwhile lives? By pursuing both value and meaning, value being unity within a life and the appropriate treatment of others, and meaning being a transcending of our limits ("tracking" more of the truth). In Nozick's final chapter, the two themes of the book—meaning and value—come together and constitute marching orders for contemporary philosophy. Philosophy is to be part of the humanities, an analysis of meaning and value that does not fall prey to the reduction of skepticism, determinism, or nihilism. These positions are not just philosophical mistakes; they are moral failings, for in seeking to reduce human beings—their knowledge, their will, their value—to something less, this Age of Reductionism has in fact lowered the value of human lives. A humane philosophy would seek to bring value into the world, not purge the world of it. In Nozick's closing words:

> We can envision a humanistic philosophy, a self-consciously artistic one, sculpting ideas, value, and meaning into new constellations, reverberative with mythic power, lifting us and ennobling us by its content and by its creation, leading us to understand and to respond to value and meaning—to experience them and attain them anew.

Value and meaning, speculation and explanation—not the sort of discourse one has come to expect from contemporary philosophy. Indeed, it is probably not too much of an exaggeration to say that, between them, Robert Nozick and Richard Rorty may have defined the poles of what will prove to be a revival in American academic philosophy. Rorty may have deconstructed the entire modern conception of philosophy while, simultaneously, Nozick has reconstructed it and pointed it in a new (or perhaps very old) direction.

Where does this leave the "analytics" and "pluralists"? It leaves them behind, I think, because the intellectual issues are far more complex than this simple Manichaean distinction will allow. What Nozick and Rorty have managed to do is to face up squarely to the crisis in contemporary philosophy with careful reason, wit, and a humane concern for the fundamental questions. Their conclusions are as different as can be imagined, but their exposition of the major issues is compelling enough to persuade even the most cynical that academic philosophy is still worth studying and still worth doing well. If the academic-political dispute in the discipline continues, the bigger minds will manage somehow to transcend it.

Looking for Mr. Good Life

AFTER VIRTUE: A STUDY IN MORAL THEORY. *By Alasdair MacIntyre. University of Notre Dame Press. $15.95.*

Reviewed by GEORGE KATEB

At the end of a long, difficult, and extremely rewarding book on the nature of morality, Alasdair MacIntyre concentrates his disgust with modern life in these words:

> If my account of our moral condition is correct, we ought also to conclude that for some time now we too have reached that turning point [reached by concerned people in the time of troubles of the Roman Empire]. What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us.... This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time.... We are waiting not for a Godot, but for another—doubtless very different—St. Benedict.

Such cultural pessimism will surprise those familiar with MacIntyre's abundant earlier work, which is marked by a tendency to avoid any extremism of commitment, while sensitively exploring those systems of thought that demand such extremism. He has always been a combative writer, whether the adversary is Freud, Marx, Marcuse, or the behaviorists. But he has also shown a marvelous intellectual poise. Of course, there are many qualities more important than poise. Anger is good for the mind. *After Virtue*, however, is not only a book of anger but of disgust, disaffection,

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and worse. These feelings animate the work. MacIntyre sounds like an embittered prophet. He joins the ranks (I had not thought them underpopulated) of conservative critics of modernity.

Why yearn for another Saint Benedict? Why yearn for a new discipline? That we live at the start of "new dark ages" derives from MacIntyre's sense that our social relations are made unendurably thin and cruel, and ultimately chaotic, by the encouragement of individualist self-seeking and by the compensatory erection of bureaucratic controls. The diagnosis is quite familiar: Max Weber (whom MacIntyre mistakes for an apostle of modernity) did not say it all, but he said a lot of it in a few pages at the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Tocqueville had already said it in the still mostly preindustrial age. What is new in MacIntyre's account is that modern individualism is intensified by the state in which modern moral philosophers have left the theory of morality. The consequence of several centuries of moral thought has been the doctrine of emotivism. The modern belief is that amoral individualism is the sole correct inference from emotivism. Only Nietzsche has had the will to state this fact with radical honesty. MacIntyre maintains that emotivism is a false doctrine. If its falseness can be exposed, then individualism can be undermined and small steps on the way to human salvation taken. Such a beginning requires a statement of moral truth. *After Virtue* is intended as a contribution to moral truth and hence to human salvation. Its strategy is to refute emotivism and replace it with the right moral doctrine.

By emotivism MacIntyre means the view that all statements expressing moral judgments refer to nothing but the preferences of the speaker. The actual language of judgment pretends to more than mere preference: it pretends to standards that exist objectively and, hence, apart from anyone's preference—standards that everyone may know and to which truthful appeal may always be made. The theory of emotivism, however, maintains that such standards do not exist; only subjective preferences exist, disguised in a rational language that they have no right to use.

For MacIntyre, emotivism is false, but its hold on the theorists of morality is the result of much labor to overcome it—failed labor. MacIntyre speaks of the failure of the Enlightenment project, by which he means the common inability of such antagonistic thinkers as Hume, Bentham, and Kant to provide "a rational justification for an objective morality." He finds crippling deficiencies in the efforts of each to establish a proper basis for moral judgment and claims that these deficiencies are by now commonly, if not consistently, acknowledged. Neither human need, nor pleasure, nor duty is a principle immune from severe challenge to its adequacy. The bankruptcy of theory leads to the self-spiting solace of emotivism; and from emotivism comes the warrant for a general self-seeking in society. If nothing is objectively right, why should I not live as I please and do as I want until fear or prudence stops me?

The trouble with MacIntyre's theoretical analysis is that he thinks that the question of finding "a rational justification for an objective morality" is a proper one. This trouble he shares with the emotivists. He is no more warranted in thinking that he has provided an answer to the right question than they are in thinking that no answer is possible to the same right question. I do not believe that the question is the right one at all. MacIntyre's answer is profound in itself; but the question to which it is one possible answer is, What is a more human life than the one we now have? It is not, What is the rational justification for an objective morality?

Morality cannot use a rational *justification*. Morality needs no justification. Trying to justify it is like trying to justify things that it resembles and that it nourishes and is nourished by—love, friendship, acquaintance, fellow feeling, collegiality, solidarity, fraternity. Morality is one complex tie between people, though of course not the only one. It needs no justification, any more than love and friendship (and the other ties) need justification. Should we try to justify a parent's love, or a friend's loyalty, or a samaritan's neighborliness?

MacIntyre wants *authentication* for morality. The heroic effort found in the Enlightenment (and found before and after it too) is to dispense with the need for authentication: to show that because humanity cannot exist unless morality exists, it does not require going beyond humanity to establish the necessary place of morality in human life. Enlighten-

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ment thinkers did not fail to find authentication; they hoped (against hope) that humanity was at last sufficiently grown-up to dispense with it. They disagreed with each other on many substantive points, and we may find none of their accounts of the moral life completely satisfying. Still, they thought it both childish and mistaken to assume that human beings needed to be assured by something greater than themselves that they should treat each other decently or fairly or with love and affection—as if they needed God's permission not to mistreat each other—as if they could never know the real reason for being good because it is locked in divine knowledge that the human mind could never penetrate. In fact, to want such authentication or sponsorship or authority is to destroy morality conceptually, by filling the heart with inducements to do the right thing that are essentially selfish or self-regarding in nature, or by leading the intellect to forget that unless people do the right thing, there can never be such a thing as *human* life at all. Of course, not all cultures reason abstractly about moral principles and moral conflicts. Of course, moral perplexity and disagreement must bedevil all those that do reason abstractly. But these facts, and all the other facts that are supposed to make us despair of ever finding a rational basis for objective morality, are misconstrued. They show: that it is hard to think about what morality requires in a particular situation; that moral disputes are inevitable; that moral concepts need explication; and that the practice of thinking about morality is not universal. Nothing that MacIntyre says makes these complexities less intractable. Justice, for example, remains every bit as "essentially contested." He does not appreciate the fact that the only honest society is precisely the one in which moral dispute is institutionalized—the liberal society he so despises. Still, there is no mystery about what it means, at the deepest level, to do the right thing or to be good. It means—everyone knows that it means—to treat others like oneself. A few things are absolutely wrong; the rest of right and wrong is a matter of more or less, of maybe and probably. Doing right and avoiding wrong need no justification. Morality cannot endure being justified: it is denatured by the process.

And if someone asks if he should do the right thing when he could get away with doing the wrong thing, his question in itself shows that he does not want to be moral. He wants to be self-interested instead and is daring you to show that his self-interest will be advanced if he goes through the motions of moral-seeming behavior. He asks an idiot's question. It is lamentable that some philosophers (including the greatest) have thought this question legitimate. MacIntyre does not take it up as such, but the anxiety of its presence may be felt in his text.

Now, I must acknowledge that in his quest for authentication, MacIntyre does not have recourse to anything transcendental or otherworldly. Overtly, at least, his moral theory is purely secular. Thus it is not likely to satisfy those who think that morality needs nonhuman authentication. Indeed, they may think that MacIntyre is as forgetful of God, the only possible authenticator, as any of the proudly secular moralists whom he condemns, like Hume and Bentham. Readers who hope to find in *After Virtue* their expectations of authentication fulfilled may turn away, feeling that MacIntyre, too, has failed them. In his failure they may find a further source of despair. The book may contribute to the strength of emotivism.

His strategy is to claim that a person's moral judgments can be authenticated only by a prior conception of the kind of life he should lead, which turns out to be life as a member, life in common with others in something morally prior to anyone. The moral unit is thus not the person, but the group or class. Different groups and classes of persons within the same society will lead the different kinds of life appropriate to them. Each kind of life will require the display of different virtues, or the same virtues in varying proportions and emphases. MacIntyre calls his theory a morality of virtues, in opposition to a morality of uniform rules. Ideally, a person's life would be shaped by the regular activities, the practices, in which he engages as a member of a group or class. Practices elicit, cultivate, strengthen, and reward the appropriate virtues. To live a life rooted in practices is to go a fair part of the distance toward giving form to one's life, the form of a coherent narrative. A narrative is marked, not by cynical and versatile role playing or by an estranged and double-minded inhabiting of roles, but by the wholehearted effort to become a realized character, a repre-

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sentative character, not a mere separate individual. MacIntyre takes us close to the conservative prescription of "my station and its duties." But he feels compelled to find a place for the universal, after all. Arbitrariness would invade the moral life, he says, without an ultimate good, a final cause, that is higher than those "goods" contained in the practices that help to compose a life. There must be a general conception of the good life: good for all. This finally is the authentication for all moral choices and judgments. The good life is their source, frame, and purpose. What is it? Anticlimactically, he answers: "The good life for man is the life spent in seeking the good life for man." With such an ultraliberal notion at its center, his system truly becomes arbitrary, leaving the state of moral theory more exposed to what he fears than when he began.

We do ourselves and MacIntyre a service, I believe, if we detach this substantive moral vision from the question of authentication altogether. Even if the quest for authentication were a legitimate enterprise, MacIntyre's theory would not satisfy many of those engaged in it or those receptively awaiting its results. Their disappointment would be general, not confined to the clever, Nozick-like formalism of his conception of the good life. Let us regard *After Virtue* as one of the major works of nostalgia of our time. As such, we can find in it a splendid capacity to construct a world in which every feature cooperates to one purpose: glorifying the *bounded* individual. From Homer, Sophocles, Aristotle, and others more recent, MacIntyre works with incredible energy to persuade us of the beauty of living a life that is made more firm by being greatly reduced in self-consciousness. I think that self-consciousness is really, for MacIntyre, the greatest vice in the condition of modernity. How, MacIntyre furiously asks, can society go on when the temptations, risks, uncertainties, possibilities, opportunities, powers, and instruments of life multiply to such an extent as to deprive every self of a sense of knowing himself or his world—of knowing his place? Every step of the way leads to the need to think about the next step. MacIntyre sees mostly confusion, dissolution; he fears, even worse, chaos. His theory of the morality of virtues is in the service of saving a little in the midst of what he perceives as a growing wasteland. I say that it will do nothing to stem emotivism. But will it do anything to fortify right conduct?

I am not sure. Is it likely that any work of nostalgia can fortify right conduct? Suppose, anyway, it could have some influence. Or, more abstractly, suppose the world grew closer to MacIntyre's ideal. What would be gained, what lost? As I have said, he sees to it that genuine self-consciousness would be lost: the ability to see around oneself and to know that one is never what one is at the moment. Because it is lost, I do not think the democratic self, as proposed by the great American romantics, could live in MacIntyre's utopia. Is this not a world of bad faith—that is, of false confidence in one's identity, of premature closure, of willed avoidance of experiment? It would threaten to be a world deficient in moral courage (despite MacIntyre's elitist insistence that tragic choices will inevitably be present), though happy in its fashion. That would be an odd result for a book like this, in which we find an astonishingly strong mind transmuting its unhappiness, by force of moral courage, into a thoroughly individuated performance.

The Real Thing

THE REALISTIC IMAGINATION: ENGLISH FICTION FROM FRANKENSTEIN TO LADY CHATTERLEY. *By George Levine. University of Chicago Press. $25.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL GORRA

"I wish Mr. Trollope would go on writing *Framley Parsonage* for ever," Elizabeth Gaskell wrote to her publisher, George Smith, in 1860. "I don't see any reason why it should ever come to an end." Neither did Trollope. *Framley Parsonage*, the fourth of the Barsetshire novels, employs a dozen characters from Trollope's earlier books, and introduces others—in particular, the Reverend Josiah Crawley—who figure in subsequent novels. Trollope shared with Thackeray and Balzac the practice of allowing characters and story lines to spill from one book into the next, but

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Henry James still deplored the habit in his essay on Trollope's death. For James that custom violated the autonomy of the individual work. It made the novel messy, turned it into a "large loose baggy monster," and inhibited the artist in his attempt to bring his fiction to a shapely close. But Trollope would have said that that was precisely the point. For the Victorian realist, art falsified; shapelessness was essential if one was to come close to capturing the variety and possibilities of human experience.

Thackeray often hinted that his choice of protagonist was arbitrary, that he could build a novel around any minor character as easily as around Arthur Pendennis. The hint drew attention to the novel's artifice, but also to the possibility that there might be something outside the novel—perhaps, even, "life." *Framley Parsonage* does end, but the temptation is both great and valid to ignore that ending and to view the novel as an episode in a continuously unfolding history. Its loose ends become a device that allows the novel to point, not just to another book, but to some elusive reality beyond its own language, to the fact that, in life, knots often remain untied. A modern critic, following James, might scream about the imitative fallacy. Thackeray and Trollope would have considered that a necessary risk of the novelist's task but would also have found the complaint impertinent because it ignores the assumptions upon which their work was based—assumptions radically different from James's yet no less sophisticated.

Such, at least, is one of the arguments of George Levine's *The Realistic Imagination*, a book of magisterial ambition, if one that commits too many sins of omission to be so in its final achievement. For Levine—as for Harry Levin in *The Gates of Horn*—realism begins by parodying the conventions of a past literature, moving in the process to an appreciation of the "real," of the truths hidden by literary conventions, usually those of romance. So Austen's *Northanger Abbey* starts by denying that its protagonist, Catherine Morland, is in any way a heroine. Austen asserts instead that Catherine's life is unremarkable. Her parents have not died, she is not exceptionally beautiful, and she is neither poor nor unhappy, except as adolescent girls are customarily unhappy. When evil enters her life, it does so,

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not in the shape of the Gothic horror she knows from her reading, but in the form of snobbery and mercenary ambition. Literary realism claims that the extreme conditions out of which heroism is born exist only in books, but that this book—the novel—contains a more accurate, and hence better, picture of the way things are.

Yet the tendency of modern criticism, Levine writes, has been to sever language from its referent, the book from the world—to turn the novel into a solipsistic artifact in which external conditions play no role. Levine admits the "powerful epistemological arguments" in favor of that position but does not give in to them. He argues instead that, while it may in fact be impossible to get outside the text, to deny that the Victorians wanted and tried to do just that is to miss something terribly important about their enterprise. Levine's concern, then, is with realism's elusiveness, the tension between

> . . . our common sense notion that realism tries to represent reality and our sophisticated awareness that it cannot. . . . My focus will be on the struggle inherent in any "realist" effort—the struggle to avoid the inevitable conventionality of language in pursuit of the unattainable unmediated reality.

Realism rests upon the belief that one can use words to express some truth about the life that lies outside of words—or rather upon the hope, for implicit in realism is the fear that such expression might not be possible. For Levine, chairman of the English department at Rutgers and author of a book on Victorian prose, realism's

> . . . massive self confidence implied a radical doubt. In a culture whose experience included the Romantic poets . . . Carlyle and Newman . . . Charles Lyell . . . the Higher Criticism . . . Hume, Kant, Goethe, Comte, and Spencer . . . non-Euclidean geometry . . . Mill . . . Darwin . . . in such a culture it is more than a little difficult to imagine a serious literary mode based on a "massive confidence as to what the nature of Reality actually was."

Realism can be seen as an attempt to create an image of reality, a point of stability around which Darwin and the others could twirl. The sprawl of the Victorian novel becomes a nervous assertion of permanence in a shifting world.

With that, realism's parodic quality becomes more complex. Austen—for whom, Levine justly claims, the world did make sense—denies the existence of a Gothic horror because she does not believe life works that way. The later realists, Thackeray in particular, deny that horror because they are afraid that it does in fact exist. Levine hinges this argument on a discussion of *Frankenstein*, in which the monstrous and irrational lurk beneath the slight surface of daily life—the monstrous that manifested itself in the extreme conditions the realists attempted, always unsuccessfully, to exclude from their visions. And so realism's main conventions, Levine writes, are anti-heroism and the deflation of ambition and passion; its dominant mode is comedy; and the world it "most adequately represents is a subtly disguised version of its own desires." Inevitably those conventions become stale and romanticized—nowadays even Catherine Morland seems rather like a heroine—and are parodied by later writers, so that *Ulysses* and *Gravity's Rainbow* are in some way implicit in *Northanger Abbey*.

For extremes do exist in reality, and so realism, in the narrow historical sense in which Levine finally intends the term, rests upon "the quietly dishonest assumption that the real world is not rife with extremes of action and feeling." Levine argues that Hardy saw through that dishonesty in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, turning the realistic protagonist embodied in Donald Farfrae into something loathsome and small when set against the monstrous grandeur of Michael Henchard. That re-imagination of the extreme combined with the century's increasing sense of the fragmentary quality of experience to signal realism's end. Eliot and Conrad, Levine writes, could not sustain the faith in the empirical process so essential to realism. Eliot conceived of the world as an organism, but one too complex to grasp at present—hence the morally progressive tone of her novels and her emphasis on point of view over surface description. Conrad, however, saw the world as a mechanism in which man faced the impossible yet necessary task of imposing order and meaning upon an essentially monstrous, meaningless reality; and so his impressionism, his insistence upon telling a story from one particular point of view rather than as an omniscient narrator. After Conrad, the novel

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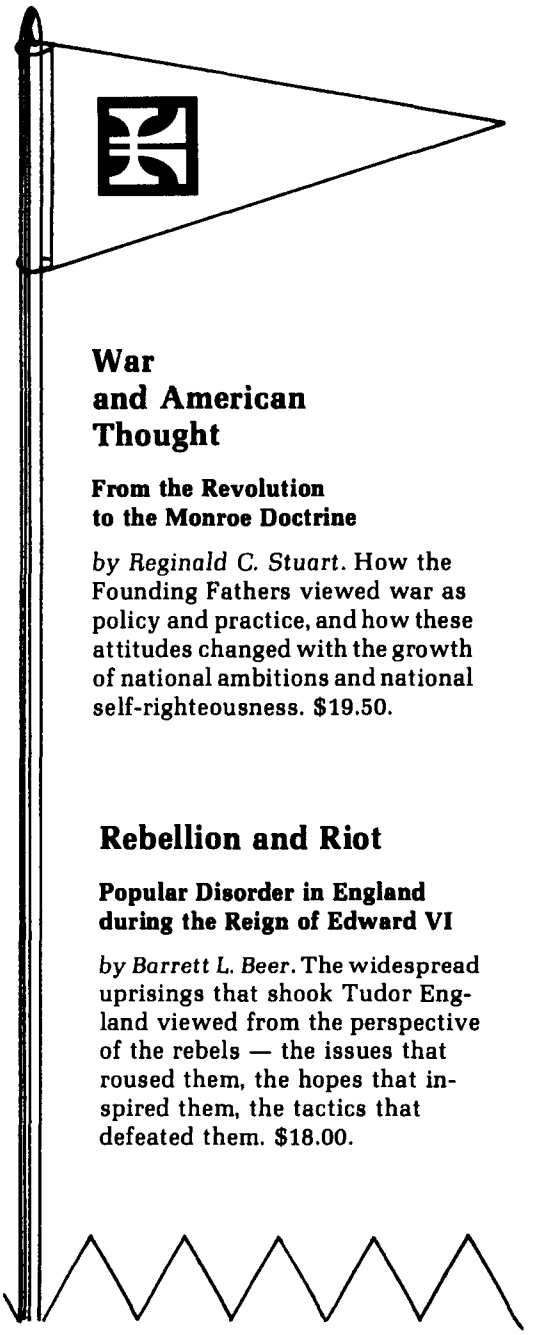
could never quite delude itself into that "massive self confidence" again.

I have problems with this concluding part of Levine's argument (Lawrence enters the book only briefly, almost as an afterthought)—not with his general sense of Conrad or Eliot, but with the method of his analysis of their relationship to realism. He pays very little attention to their novels, fastening instead on G. H. Lewes's *Problems of Life and Mind* and Eliot's essays on the one hand, and on Conrad's letters and the preface to *The Nigger of the Narcissus* on the other. I find this concentration upon theory at the expense of practice surprising, given Levine's careful attention to novels by half a dozen other writers, and question whether George Eliot's novels, in particular, reveal the same doubts about realism that Levine finds in her essays and in Lewes's work. Levine's book also suffers from its neglect of two great novelists. He avoids any extended discussion of Dickens, claiming that Dickens is not primarily a realist. And he provides good reasons for that judgment. But surely a chapter on the century's most prodigious imagination would be justified, particularly if one considers the way Dickens used memory in *Great Expectations* to transform his customary exaggerations into the material for one of the greatest of all realistic novels. And Levine's antipathy to James's criticism has, I think, resulted in a refusal to consider that writer's fiction. James thought of the novelist's task as akin to that of a historian and believed his novels to be representational. Yet in his pursuit of what he imagined to be a more complete reality, he managed to frustrate the realistic enterprise more thoroughly than either Conrad or Eliot. Levine's failure to assign him any role in realism's demise mars the last third of his book.

I make that complaint, though, because I would like to read what Levine has to say about Dickens or James. *The Realistic Imagination* is a long and densely written book, but its main fault is that it is not long enough. As it is, however, I still find Levine's study to be one of the most consistently useful considerations that we have of the nineteenth-century novel and its form. Levine makes a strong case for the sophistication of that form, for the complexity of the Victorian novelist's understanding of his process, and for the inadequacy of most criticism in dealing with it. In



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particular, he argues convincingly for the centrality of Walter Scott to the nineteenth-century novel, a centrality recognized by Scott's immediate successors but that more recent critics have tended to ignore. I can imagine this book aiding in Scott's critical renascence, and in Thackeray's. And like the best criticism of the novel—Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel*, say, or Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction*—*The Realistic Imagination* offers something more than interpretations of individual novels. It provides an imaginative perspective, a set of badly needed critical terms that should, I think, permanently affect the way that scholars engage the novel.

Implicit in *The Realistic Imagination* is Levine's conception of the function of realism today. He says that realism, defined historically, was destroyed by its own contradictions—its essentially parodic quality, its quiet dishonesty. And yet:

> Realism is inescapable. . . . The realistic impulse to affirm the referentiality of language is a reflection of irrepressible . . . energy for the art and life that reward us while they threaten at any moment to turn monstrous.

Levine's sense approximates Conrad's. Realism is impossible, but the quest for it is both inevitable and necessary. Art may be only self-referential, but its value lies in the attempt to be something more.

Is There a Biographer in the House?

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS: A NEW WORLD NAKED. *By Paul Mariani. McGraw-Hill. $24.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

There are moments, in reading through Paul Mariani's mammoth biography of William Carlos Williams, when one questions whether the time spent in pursuit of a life through these eight hundred or so pages is worth it. Why, I asked myself, as I was told in full detail about how Williams in 1933 became interested in a composer friend of the poet Louis Zukofsky and decided that he was just the man to write the music for an opera based on the life of George Washington, for which Williams would write the libretto—why, to what purpose am I following such a harebrained and uninstructive episode in the life of a man who engaged in many such episodes, as well as a few supremely intelligent and imaginative ones? Is it for the sake of a better understanding of those latter triumphs? It would be convenient if such were the case, but I think rather that the Washington opera fiasco provides yet one more instance of the credulous stubbornness in Williams, which Randall Jarrell beautifully identified by asserting, "Why, he'd say anything—creditable or discreditable, sayable or unsayable—so long as he believes it." Over the course of Mr. Mariani's heroic labor to tell the story of Williams's life, the poet says not only anything but everything, until, crippled by the paralysis of strokes, his speech and bearing ever more impaired, he subsides into final silence. Exhausted, but with the exhilaration of having completed a sort of heroic piece of reading, we feel that the life we have been engaged in pursuing is not just worth it, but very much worth it indeed.

Rather than running through, in too brief compass, the main events of this life that Williams's biographer has so painstakingly recorded, year by year and sometimes day by day, I want to concentrate instead on how the story is told and on the kind of position in which it places a reader. Mr. Mariani is candid about his obsession with his subject: "No day has passed since 1970 that I have not thought about Williams," he says, testifying that Williams became "the single most important American poet of the twentieth century for me, with Stevens right behind him." He judges Williams's poetic presence to be "more central, finally, than Eliot or Pound, and perhaps even Frost." At least one reviewer of the biography (Gilbert Sorrentino in the *New York Times Book Review*) took this opportunity to exalt Williams while belaboring Frost and Eliot as the favorites of too many "academics" or anglophiles; to enter "a new world naked" (Mariani's title alludes to one of Williams's best poems) is evidently prefera-

✪WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD teaches English at Amherst College and is the author of *Seeing Through Everything: English Writers, 1918–1940* and *Lives of the Modern Poets*.

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ble to more clothed, less "sincere" maneuvers. But if admirers of Williams tend to have more of a chip on their shoulders than is perhaps healthy, Mr. Mariani never stoops to such rabble-rousing, though his admiration is total and just about unqualified. One might argue that only through such a complete commitment to, or obsession with, the man and his poetry could a biographical work of this fullness and particularity be written. But the very fullness of his devotion to WCW makes Mariani that much less able to criticize him, if by criticism we still mean the attempt to exercise something like an Arnoldian "disinterestedness," the attempt to see the object as in itself it really is. Or, if such talk no longer appeals, let's say that Mariani is more of a partisan than a critic of Williams's utterances in poems, in prose manifestos, in letters, in off-the-cuff intimacies to his friends.

For example, in discussing *The Great American Novel*, Williams's first novel, which is really a send-up or anti-novel (it is a short and, to my eyes, pretty unreadable piece of experimental writing), Mariani emphasizes the primitive nature of Williams's search for the source of authentic American expression. In pointing out how the writers of the American renaissance, especially Emerson and Thoreau, were of no use to him in this quest, Mariani summarizes Williams's rejection of them as follows:

> They were all imitation, pure England. The ground of the American experiences rested not with them but further down, with the Indians, with Machu Picchu, with the Eskimos who had learned how to adjust to local conditions and had out of that contact created a culture whose remains still stood. As one found it in a debased but still viable form among the mountain people of Appalachia. . . .

Now if Williams needed to believe this sentimental version of American experience in order to help get his poems and fiction written, then well and good, though it may not always be well and good for the works that resulted. But there is no way, on the basis of what Mariani has written, to tell whether or not the biographer also believes it, that is, believes (just to note the most outrageous piece of simplification) that Emerson and

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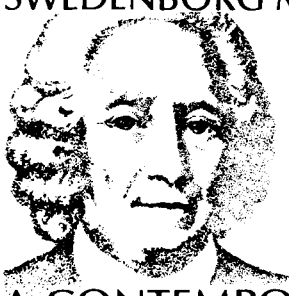

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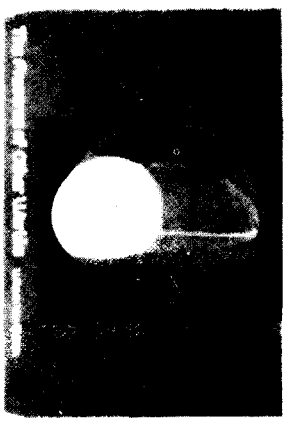

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Thoreau "were all imitation, pure England." (As for that "viable" tradition in Appalachia, it could perhaps stand to have a colder eye cast on it, just for a moment, in passing.)

Stylistically, Mariani is not about to detach himself and move from partisan to critic, since his long narrative is told very much from the inside—one perfectly good way for the biographer to operate, though not the only one. For example, when Williams—having lost Charlotte Herman (with whom he was in love) to his brother Ed—decides to ask Charlotte's sister, Florence (Floss), to marry him instead, the moment is rendered in sentences like these:

> No. He did not love Florence, but he did want to marry her. . . . Time now to act, to decide his own destiny. He'd hit bottom, descended into his own hell, and now he was struggling for air, for life, for an identity of his own with the help of this young woman [who] he somehow knew instinctively, from the set of her mouth and her chin, could be at least as tough and as resilient as himself.

He goes on to describe Floss's mixed feelings and her eventual capitulation, even down to how Williams in an "awkward attempt to hold his fiancée" had "kissed her half on the lips and half on the nose there in the Rutherford dark." If one asks why even the Rutherford dark holds no mysteries for the biographer, who seems to know exactly what kind of a kiss it was that occurred, Mariani directs us, in a footnote, to some pages from Williams's late novel *The Build-Up* ("She . . . half-turned away her face so that he touched only half her mouth with his lips.") This sort of you-are-there confidence—in which the words of a novel written by Williams more than forty years after the event about a heroine named "Flossie" are imposed without qualification on the original moment—is typical of Mariani's procedure. His assurance is that he can tell the whole story of Williams's life, never at a loss for the words to say what was really going on. I think such confidence is what kept him going so unflaggingly through his immense task, and I admire it, even while holding back from giving an instance like the one above my full participation.

A similar problem occurs, again very much at the level of language and tone, in Mariani's enthusiastic cataloguing of various four-letter words his hero liked to use, especially when characterizing literary visions hostile to his own. Williams wrote from Italy in the early 1920s that writing should include "fucks and booze" and should be christened with "champagne and semen . . . but not *shit*." The latter item was evidently to be avoided. Years later when Pound warned that he would need Eliot's support in England if he were to attain an audience there, Williams fired back "Who the hell is Eliot, that shit ass," insisting that he didn't want to receive the blessing of "that pot of addled ewe's snot." Excited about the tremendous possibilities of his opera about George Washington, Williams called it a real opera, "in spite of all those European sons of bitches who haven't yet learned how to sit on a toilet seat." The effect of such virile language or baby talk (and there is much more of it) is contagious—not only does Mariani refrain from criticizing it, he seems to be rather zestfully on its side. When at one point Williams is about to be sued for a possibly libelous short story, Mariani describes how Williams imagines Pound would feel were he in such a tight spot: "And Ezra: if it was Ezra who was standing where he now was, why he'd be shitting his pants!" One reads this and winces slightly.

"Why, he'd say anything . . . so long as he believes it." Jarrell's compliment is perhaps double-edged, since over the course of his lifetime Williams believed so many things and never hesitated to say them in the loudest voice. For all his rough badinage when writing to Pound and others, he was—though Mr. Mariani might not agree—a rather humorless soul both in his life and in his poetry, and certainly as compared with Frost or Eliot or Stevens. They, on the other hand, never delivered a baby or swabbed out a nasty infection. One of the best things about Mariani's book is the way it evokes Williams's energy and charity as a physician, as when speaking of his treatment of the Italian and Polish-American communities from Rutherford, or of the Irish and the black patients he served (he was one of the few doctors in Rutherford who treated black patients). Mariani writes that

> he served them as best he could, imperfectly perhaps, jealous of his time away from writing, but never stinting and often performing those extra services very rarely found today with doctors: stok-

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ing up a furnace that had gone out in the apartment of an old woman he was treating for a cold, taking the time with another woman to explain to her that her son—away at war—was probably fine . . . talking firmly with the parents of a child who had been beaten by the father at a time when all doctors considered such a course of action an impropriety, or just making extra visits to a house to make sure a patient was mending. You felt good just hearing him come in the door, some of those patients would remember.

A subtler humorist, a more ironic sensibility, would not have served them as well, or at all.

Mr. Mariani is also brave and clearheaded enough to believe in Williams's poetry as the central fact of his life, so that to write the life without discussing the poems would be a travesty. Accordingly, he moves back and forth from life to art without evident strain or apology, and his remarks about the early poems from *Al Que Quiere!* (one of Williams's best books) or the late ones from *The Desert Music* and *Journey to Love* are pointed and relevant, spurring us to reread and see once more for ourselves. Even better is the treatment of *Paterson*. Mariani's is the fullest, most sympathetic portrait, that I am aware of, of the social and personal context out of which Williams wrote this long poem. Those of us who keep bumping our heads against *Paterson* and meeting only sporadic success need to try once more with Mariani as a persuasive guide to the territory, even if there are more rough spots than—in the proselytizing fervor of his belief in virtually everything the man wrote—the biographer admits. Here the corrective still seems to me to be found in Jarrell's writing about Williams: the glowing salute to and admirably close inspection of *Paterson*, book 1, when it came out; the slightly later introduction to the *Selected Poems*, in which Mariani is probably right to find more of a yes-and-no response to Williams's poetry (a few great lyrics, a wonderful man, a paucity of ideas); and the later disappointment in the successive books of *Paterson* as they appeared. Mariani is sorry that Jarrell's criticism has been so central in presenting a picture of Williams to students and would-be readers; but his own response—at times an overprotective and uncritical love of the man and his work—is really no safer, though no more dangerous.

Williams's long and arduous struggle for

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literary success has been seen by others, and often by himself, as an indication of corruption in high places, as an indication of the university-New Critical suppression of this voice from outside the academy, outside the pentameter or sonnet, outside the novel as traditionally practiced. But as Mariani shrewdly puts it, his books were generated "in the absence of a recognizable formal imperative," out of the need "to keep on writing." I would go on to add that surely he wrote too much, that surely much of it already looks dated, or less than essential, and that one needs to look and listen hard and carefully to separate out the things that will continue to count: the charming insouciant poems from *Al Que Quiere!*; a goodly number of marvelous ones such as "By the road to the contagious hospital" (not "On the road . . . " as Mariani calls it) or "The Yachts" (which he rightly observes to be an untypical Williams poem); parts of *Paterson*, and many of the "variable foot" poems collected in *Pictures from Brueghel*—especially "To Asphodel, that Greeny Flower." If these aren't enough to make Williams the central poetic presence of our century—and I don't think they are—they are more than enough to ensure that he will be read and enjoyed for many years to come.

Mme Y

FIRES. *By Marguerite Yourcenar. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $12.95.*

Reviewed by ELIAS CRIM

Historical novelists are usually assumed to be something like literary carpenters: their sturdy facsimiles of ancient Rome or medieval France are meant to instruct or to entertain, often in an artful way. Only rarely does a work like *Joseph and His Brothers* or *Orlando* come along to burst the bounds of this (sometimes dull) category of "historical novel."

Marguerite Yourcenar is the author of several such works. (To return to the examples cited above, she has also translated Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* and dedicated an essay to the work of Thomas Mann.) She is principally known to English readers for three remarkable novels: *Memoirs of Hadrian* (1954), *Coup de Grace* (1957), and *The Abyss* (1976). Her preference for historical settings—Antonine Rome, the Baltic states during the First World War, and Renaissance Europe, respectively—does not preclude wider ambitions, however. "In our day," Mme Yourcenar comments, "when introspection tends to dominate literary forms, the historical novel, or what may for convenience's sake be called by that name, must take the plunge into time recaptured."

The Proustian echo here is deliberate, of course, and no doubt a kind of protest against her forcible enrollment in the carpenter's guild—the hasty reviewer's sidelong glance at Graves's *I, Claudius,* Renault's *The Last of the Wine,* or Pater's *Marius the Epicurean.* (A tedious game, this: why not throw in Bulwer-Lytton's *Last Days of Pompeii* or General Lew Wallace's *Ben Hur* for good measure?) Yet readers of Marguerite Yourcenar's essay (in the collection *Sous bénéfice d'inventaire*) on the Greek poet Cavafy may recall her quotation from that author: "I am a poet-historian. I could never write a novel or a play, but I feel in me a hundred and twenty-five voices that tell me that I could write history." In a highly compressed manner, Yourcenar then suggests, Cavafy does in fact give us a vibrant sense of "that civilization of the *koinē*, the *langue vulgaire*, that *Graecia Magna* born out of dispersion rather than conquest," little of which resembles her own tradition's *hellénisme de marbre blanc.*

Mme Yourcenar recognizes in Cavafy a fellow Alexandrian, I think—a temperamental and stylistic affinity stronger than a shared taste for ruins. An "Alexandrian" writer in this sense feels himself (as did the artists around Ptolemy's court) as part of an age learned, derivative, extremely experimental in small ways, and capable of producing charmingly erudite minor work. (Such an attitude does not necessarily create literary epigones, however, as the examples of Catullus and Horace attest.)

We should notice another aspect of this kinship: the theme of homosexuality. Whereas Cavafy's poems keep a demotic tone that suits the taverns and brothels of their settings, Yourcenar's erotic scenes are drawn with a

ELIAS CRIM, a financial writer in Chicago, has worked as a house translator for *Diogenes* (UNESCO), among other journals.

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mandarin finesse, even in her *Memoirs of Hadrian*, the work in which, curiously enough, her most highly colored and sensual passages occur.

These points about Cavafy lead me to a new translation of a work by Mme Yourcenar, one which will testify to her own status as a "poet-historian." With the publication of *Fires*, Marguerite Yourcenar's English readers now have further evidence (unnecessary for French readers, who have access to her plays and poetry) of the lyric sensibility behind her novels. Originally published in 1936 (when the author was thirty-two years old), *Fires* is a sequence of prose poems "connected by a notion of love." More to the point, they are "the product of a love crisis," one that is never directly described. Instead, its searing mental states are allowed to surface through sketches of nine male and female figures, all from Greek mythology (with the exception of Mary Magdalene), and each reflecting a different facet of love.

The reader ought to be reassured at the outset that *Fires* is more than merely a collection of those neoclassical exercises so dear to generations of French schoolteachers. Nor does *Fires* contain the kind of tendentious "modernizing" of antiquity indulged in during the 1930s and 1940s by Messrs. Gide and Anouilh and that unpleasant M. Sartre. Instead, these ancient figures move in impressionistic landscapes that are freshly imagined and yet convincing. At times queerly modern touches obtrude: Mme Yourcenar makes deft use of occasional anachronisms to achieve striking effects. Phaedra, for example, finds herself taking a hellish Metro ride; Antigone's Thebes is ringed with prison camp searchlights; Achilles glimpses a tank convoy pushing toward the Trojan ramparts. These juxtapositions lend touches of painful immediacy amidst scenes set in what is otherwise the mythological *illud tempus*—the "dark backward and abysm of time."

A series of journal entries or *pensées* on the love affair introduces each hero or heroine. Among the first of these entries, we find:

> Absent, your face expands so that it fills the universe. You reach the fluid state which is one of the ghosts. Present, your face condenses, you achieve the concentration of the heaviest metals, of iridium, of mercury. This weight kills me when it falls on my heart.

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While readers unused to Yourcenar's style may find this a little mannered, her choice of conceits here—one based on the protoscience of alchemy—is characteristic. (*The Abyss*, for example, explores and celebrates in some detail the theme of alchemy as an analogue to the artist's labor, his creation out of dross.) Particularly at work here is the notion of opposites or contraries alternately rarefying and condensing into each other.

Throughout *Fires*, in fact, we find that love's power to transform one thing or person into another is a recurrent device (and perception). Achilles, for example, laments the passing of "the days of heroic tenderness, when the adversary was the dark other side of the friend." Mary Magdalene describes her own transformation: "All we ever do is change enslavements: at the exact moment the devils left me, I became possessed by God." Clytemnestra, before the jury, asserts that her ten years of waiting killed Agamemnon for her—his murder should then have ended her torment. Yet, she concludes with the mad logic of an abandoned woman, "You cannot kill a dead man."

Perhaps the most striking (and purely "classical") section in *Fires* is the monologue called "Phaedo, or the Dance." From a few sentences in Diogenes Laërtius, Mme Yourcenar has set a scene: a dance hall in Athens, where the drunken Alcibiades has brought a "small, potbellied old man" to watch a beautiful slave boy perform. Bought and then freed by Alcibiades, Phaedo soon joins the circle of young men around Socrates. This unlikely disciple gradually comes to associate his own abandonment to dancing with the strange, silent fits of the philosopher, his lapses into "wonder." At the end, when the others feel only anger or despair at their master's acquiescence in the verdict of death, it is Phaedo who guesses that "the alleys of discourse Socrates had wandered through his whole life led only to the edge of silence where the heartbeats of gods are heard." After the teacher and the rest of his pupils are dead, only Phaedo remains to reflect on the secret of Socrates' "supreme mischievousness" and to dance rather than merely "to grow cold. . . , the Sage's true death."

While this piece owes something to Paul Valéry, as Mme Yourcenar acknowledges in her preface, her richly imaginative powers naturally lead her away from the rather dry musings typical of that writer. By contrast, her Phaedo is a character deeply felt as he walks through an Athens whose streets "smelled of urine, rancid oil, and dust tumbled by the wind." The same elegant specificity runs through all the works of this newly-elected Immortal of the Académie Française. (May her new fame bring more of those works into English.) An alchemist in language who has distilled many fine pages from the rawest *materia historica*, Marguerite Yourcenar has virtually no competitors in this peculiar and demanding craft.

Soaring

EARLY MEMOIRS. *By Bronislava Nijinska, translated and edited by Irina Nijinska and Jean Rawlinson, introduction by Anna Kisselgoff. Holt, Rinehart & Winston. $22.50.*

Reviewed by RICHARD BUCKLE

Yes, Bronislava Nijinksa kept a diary. That is the secret of how this extraordinary book came to be written. I know from experience how a few facts scribbled in an engagement book—there is no need for passages of description or reflection—are enough to conjure up not only the atmosphere but also many unrecorded incidents of a period long past. The editors, Irina Nijinska (Bronislava's daughter) and Jean Rawlinson, tell us in their foreword, "As well as keeping a personal diary since her schooldays, 1900–08, she had also, since becoming an Artist of the Imperial Theatres, been jotting down her impressions." Later, in the twenties, when she had escaped from Russia (presumably carrying the diaries with her) and her brother Vaslav was mad, "she found time to compose fuller recollections about Vaslav and their life and work together . . . written in what she called her '*cahiers*.' " In the sixties she settled down in Pacific Palisades to write her precious testimony: yet she interrupted her literary work to stage revivals of her most famous ballets, the

RICHARD BUCKLE, former ballet critic for the London Sunday *Times*, is the author of *Buckle at the Ballet: Selected Ballet Writings, Diaghilev*, and *Nijinsky*.

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frivolous *Les Biches* and the epic *Les Noces*, in several European cities. Time was getting short. Before she died in Paris in 1972, she indicated to her daughter how certain gaps in her story were to be filled.

As a woman, Bronislava Nijinska combined tremendous force of character with childlike simplicity. I only met her in 1968, but that was my impression. Both of these qualities are evident in her book and provide—if one were in any doubt that it was her own work—proof of its authenticity. Her force is shown by her unwavering confidence in her judgment of what was right and what was wrong in the world of ballet. She gives her verdicts with the authority of an absolute monarch, conscious that she and her brother constituted a royal family of the dance. Her simplicity emerges in her style of writing, which is so unselfconscious as to border on the naive, like parts of William Blake.

Students of dance history will have become familiar, from the memoirs or biographies of Kchessinskaya, Pavlova, Kyasht, and, above all, Karsavina, with the kind of training these ballerinas enjoyed at the Imperial Ballet School of Saint Petersburg and the kind of life they lived. Since Bronislava Nijinska's parents, Foma (Thomas) and Eleonora Nijinsky, though both dancers, were not reared in that privileged academy and never became members of the Maryinsky company, their itinerant life of performing in provincial theaters and circuses was very different. Their two sons and only daughter were exposed to far richer and more varied impressions than most children of their age. Bronislava was born in Minsk in 1891, an hour after her parents had been dancing the polonaise together in Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*. Her brothers, Stanislav (who later became feebleminded) and Vaslav were born respectively in the Caucasus and in Kiev. All were baptized in Warsaw. It was only in 1897, when Foma took a mistress, that Eleonora brought her children to settle in Saint Petersburg. Vaslav and Bronislava were accepted by the Imperial School in 1898 and 1900, respectively.

One of the amazing things about this book is the detail in which its author remembers the itinerary of her vagrant youth and of what she and Vaslav did in each town. She recalls, when she was three, Vaslav's first public performance with his elder brother in a *hopak* in

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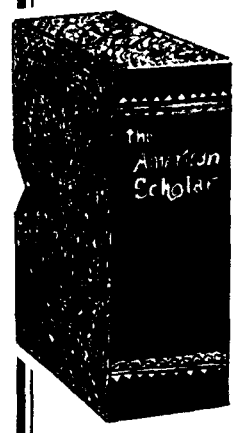

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Odessa. "Vaslav danced the part of the girl. . . . On his head was a garland of artificial cornflowers, poppies and long blue and yellow ribbons. . . . Mama touched up their cheeks with a little rouge, using a hare's foot to apply it." In Nijni-Novgorod in 1894 the family made friends with Jackson and Johnson, a Negro tap-dancing team from the United States, who gave Bronislava lessons. That Christmas Bronislava, nearly aged four, made her stage debut in a Chinese dance and in a sailor trio with her brothers. For the season of the last tsar's coronation, the Nijinskys were at Narva on the Baltic, and Thomas staged his version of *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* in the theater-circus. While there Vaslav teamed up with a stable boy: when his parents were at the theater and he was supposed to be asleep, Vaslav rode bareback with him to water the horses in the river. In 1897, when his parents were performing in a summer theater on the islands near Saint Petersburg, Vaslav stole a ruble from the dresser to pay gypsies for an excursion in a boat. "Take your pants down!" his father exclaimed; but his mother caught at the raised hand and interceded. I quote these tiny incidents to show my incredulity at the detail with which Mme Nijinska was able to reconstruct her youth and that of her great brother. When she so kindly helped me with my own biography of Nijinsky, I knew she was working on this book: but if I had known how much she had to say that was new, and how well she would contrive to say it, I think I should have abandoned my task.

Less astonishing perhaps, but even more precious, are the author's descriptions of her brother's training, development, and flowering. She never doubted his genius, and of so many witnesses—Benois, Karsavina, Cocteau, Romola Nijinsky, and the much-quoted critics of Paris, London, New York, Boston, et cetera—she is the one whose evidence we must rate most highly. Even at eighteen, Nijinsky had the perception to realize that the feathered wings traditionally attached by wire to the Blue Bird's arms in the Maryinsky production of *The Sleeping Beauty* rendered the dancer's difficult variation less, not more, expressive, and he had them abolished. "His arms did not bend at the elbow, but the movement as in the wing of a bird was generated in the shoulder. . . . A flittering motion of the hands at the wrist and . . . the Blue Bird was soaring and singing its bird's song. . . . Nijinsky was following his creative path on his own. . . . Neither Diaghilev nor Bakst nor Benois was at his side to guide him."

The author has nothing but good to say of Prince Lvov, who loved and helped Nijinsky before he met Diaghilev. We learn much that is new about Vaslav's association with the latter, about the part Kchessinskaya played in Nijinsky's dismissal from the Imperial Theatres, about the inception of Nijinsky's first ballet, *L'Après-midi d'un faune*. We learn that Diaghilev was doubtful on first sight of Vaslav's daring experiment. We learn a great deal about Diaghilev that we never knew before. Mme Nijinska makes it clear that the bond between Diaghilev and Nijinsky was already loosening when the latter met his fate—the young Hungarian, Romola—on board the *Avon* and married her in Buenos Aires. She also reveals that one reason Nijinsky never returned to Russia after 1911 was that he was liable for military service. The story ends with the outbreak of war in 1914, although there is a brief epilogue describing the reunion of Bronislava and her mother with Vaslav in 1921. By then he could no longer recognize them.

I have written as if this were a life of Nijinsky, rather than an autobiography of his sister: and indeed that is partly what she intended it to be. Yet even with the fabulous brother omitted, the book is a remarkable study of a dancer's hopes and fears, successes and disappointments. Mme Nijinska's impossible love for the promiscuous Chaliapin is a surprise, and perhaps made a little too much of. There are photographs—not only family ones—that are unfamiliar. (The publishers have found it mandatory, since the book deals with the years before and after the turn of the century, to sprinkle among these, and to head each chapter with, art nouveau curlicues.)

We are half promised a sequel to this invaluable document.

Editor's Note

Owing to an error in the printing of Donald Lawder's poem in our Spring 1982 issue, the line that read "and be any color your choose." should have read "and be any color you choose."

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